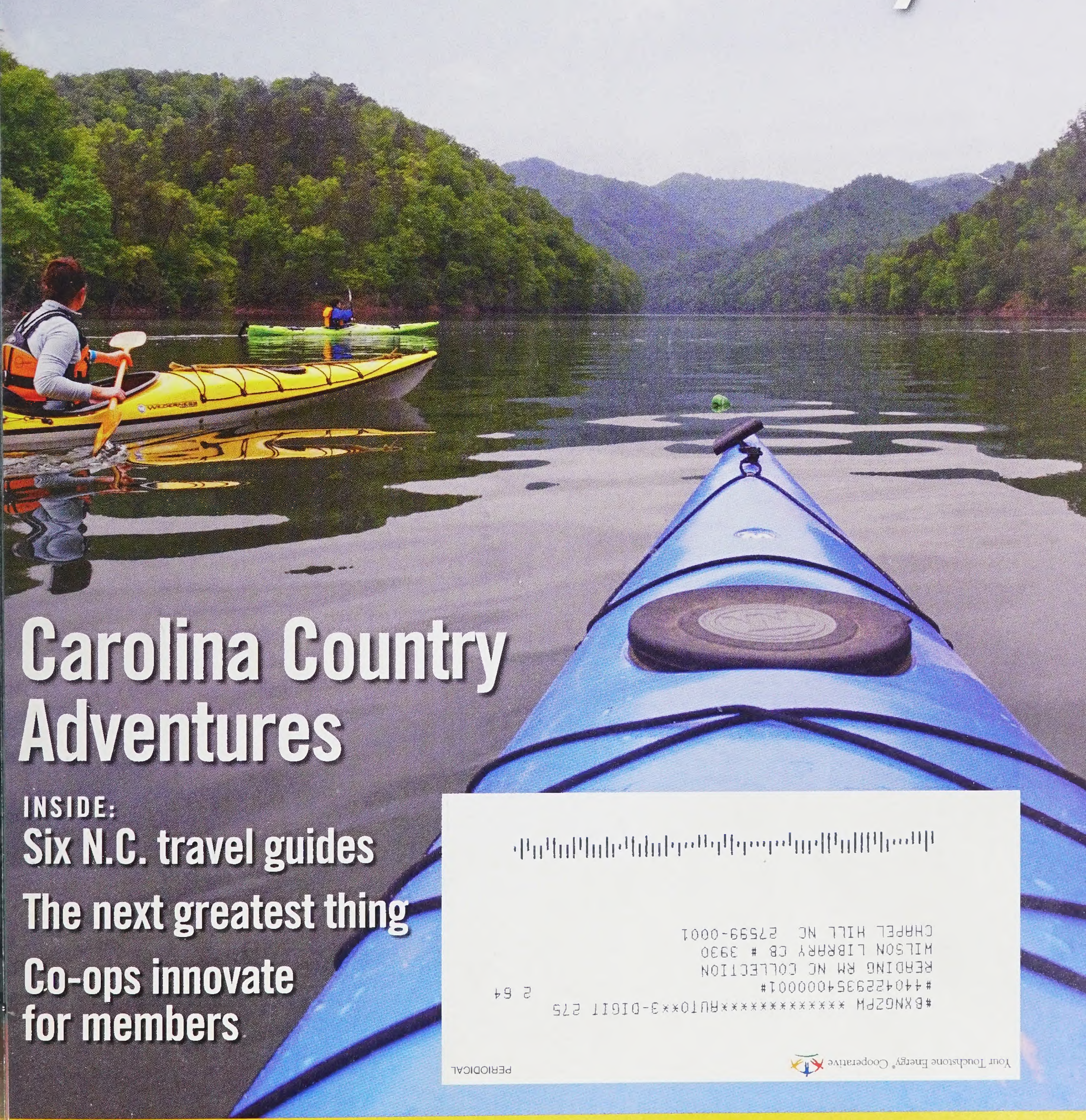
The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 48, No. 4, April 2016

Carolina country



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The next greatest thing

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Mount Olive Pickle Festival—see page 30

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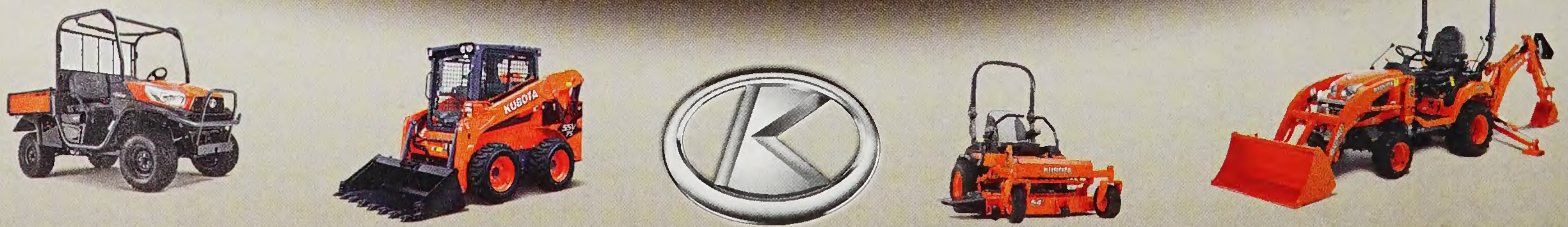

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April 2016
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North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to nearly 900,000 homes and businesses. The 26 electric cooperatives are each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a board of directors elected by the membership.

Why Do We Send You Carolina Country Magazine?
Your cooperative sends you Carolina Country as a convenient, economical way to share with its members information about services, director elections, meetings and management decisions. The magazine also carries legal notices that otherwise would be published in other media at greater cost.

Your co-op's board of directors authorizes a subscription to Carolina Country on behalf of the membership at a cost of less than $5 per year.

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Innovation for all

By Donnie Spivey

Electric cooperatives have experienced a lot of change over the years. What started out as a necessity — bringing power to those who lived in rural areas in the 1930s — has since turned into something greater: a commitment to improve the quality of life in the communities we serve. We are locally owned and operated, and are driven to support our communities in the same way we're driven to provide our members with affordable, reliable electricity.

This mission directly corresponds to our members' satisfaction and engagement, areas we continuously strive to improve. These days, improving lives and communities means innovating to match your needs to technological advances, including power generation.

This innovation is demonstrated by electric cooperatives across North Carolina and the nation as they add solar power to their energy portfolios. Solar energy is popular among many of our members, but it can be cost prohibitive. Other barriers that prevent interested members from installing solar at their homes include tree shading, roof size and weight restrictions, availability of land or space, or not owning your residence.

Many electric cooperatives are introducing community solar farms as a solution. With community solar farms, solar panels are grouped together and the costs and energy output associated with the installation are shared, making it a more affordable and accessible option for all cooperative members.

When Pee Dee Electric brought its community solar farm online in 2015, Roy Hipple of Marshville proudly joined the local solar movement, said his wife, Margaret, and though he passed away shortly after signing up, it is a part of his legacy that will live on.

"Roy believed in the importance of reducing our impact on the earth, and was so excited when Pee Dee announced the community solar farm," said Margaret Hipple. "The solar farm provided a way for us to participate in something bigger than ourselves that would have a positive impact on the environment."

Community solar also supports the cooperative's "all of the above" energy strategy needed to keep electric bills affordable. While energy efficiency programs and renewable energy are important components of our energy future, we firmly believe our nation also needs electricity generated from traditional sources, like nuclear and natural gas plants. Combined with these traditional sources, renewable energy resources will ensure we have an adequate and reliable supply of electricity that is affordable.

Pee Dee Electric also understood the impact a community solar farm could have on education in our community. Schools, civic groups, youth camps and members visit the solar farm to learn how power is generated, the economics of solar generation and how those concepts relate to the cooperative's purpose of providing reliable and affordable electricity.

Response to the community solar farm from both members and the community has been positive. The solar farm demonstrates our commitment to innovation and education, commitments to our members that go well beyond simply providing electricity.

Community solar not only provides our members with an option when it comes to energy and efficiency, but it also positions electric cooperatives at the forefront of innovation when it comes to meeting member needs. Electric cooperatives will continue to develop effective strategies for incorporating renewable energy into their power portfolios in ways that give members control and flexibility while also ensuring the continued safe, reliable and affordable delivery of electricity to all cooperative members.

Donnie Spivey is CEO and executive vice president of Pee Dee Electric, the Touchstone Energy cooperative serving more than 20,000 member-accounts in Anson, Richmond and parts of Montgomery, Scotland, Moore, Stanly and Union counties. He also serves on the board for GreenCo Solutions, formed by the state's electric cooperatives to assist in their renewable energy and energy efficiency activities.

Community solar farms are coming online in electric cooperative communities across the state. Although not every co-op has a community solar farm, all co-ops include renewable energy as part of their energy mix to achieve renewable energy requirements established by the state.

No warmth in LEDs

The article on LED lighting in the February 2016 issue ["Try This! LEDS are making headway"] is very informative, but leaves out one consideration that may be undesirable to many users. When dimming LED lights, they maintain the same color temperature as they emit when they are fully on. Therefore, the "warm glow" that you can achieve with incandescent bulbs cannot be duplicated by dimmed LED bulbs. They simply put out less light, so the effect is very different and not desirable in many situations.

Don Norwood, Blowing Rock
A member of Blue Ridge Electric

Manage electricity efficiently

While I enjoy reading most of the articles in Carolina Country, I am distressed at reading the letter posted by Ken Jobe [Viewpoint: "A new path to electricity," February 2016].

I often read articles giving members advice on how to save on their electric bills — often lowering comfort levels to have lower bills or buy different equipment to affect the same.

As you should know, buying energy-efficient equipment is often expensive and pay back is usually for an extended period, making that cost prohibitive for a lot of people. So, the outcome is, be miserable and pay a big electric bill.

Mr. Jobe endorses a man-made cause for global warming and cessation of burning fossil fuel to generate electricity. I would hope Mr. Jobe would check the facts that are so frequently misquoted to support his position. I would hope Mr. Jobe, occupying his position, would be a little more favorable to lowering our costs by using the technologies we have and not using "new technology" until we actually have it. He can influence, on a personal basis, searching for his new path all he wants. Right now he has the duty to manage production of electricity as efficiently as possible. I would think that would be using natural gas and nuclear for generation. Not so much wind and solar.

Mike Steele, Ennice
A member of Blue Ridge Electric

My wife and I bought a vacation home on Duck Creek, along the Pamlico River, in July 2015. We have been watching a pair of Eagles land in the tall trees across the water on Sandy Point almost every morning and sometimes in the afternoon. They are there for an hour or so looking for a meal each time. My wife gave me a telescope for Christmas, and I added a camera mount to it. In late January, while still learning to use my telescope, I lined up on the tree branches the Eagles use and waited. Only one showed up. The light was wrong for the photo (facing east). The Eagle came back that afternoon and I got a few pretty decent pictures. Maybe next time it will land facing our house. I'm still looking for a better picture to blow up and hang on our wall.

Kent Jordan, Wendell

The sun doesn't always shine

In the "Solar Panels" letter in Viewpoints [March 2016, page 5], Mr. Butterworth offered his opinion on solar panels as a response to an earlier submission on coal. I felt it very necessary to provide some information to counter those opinions.

First, I would point out that listing all the hidden costs in coal due to emissions and health issues without mentioning anything about the pollutants and emissions from the manufacture of the solar panels is a bit hypocritical.

Second, I would agree that solar is pollution- and carbon dioxide-free (outside the manufacturing process) as long as the sun shines, as pointed out by Mr. Butterworth. However, the sun doesn't always shine, just typically anywhere from eight to 12 hours per day, depending on the season. Until we have better solutions for storage of the energy produced during the daylight hours, we cannot sustain a continued supply of uninterrupted power.

Now about the costs. The reasons the cost is competitive with current forms of electricity production is two-fold. First, the government is propping-up the solar industry with tax credits. Secondly, the utilities are required to buy back the extra production at retail rates. The problem with that is the solar panel owners incur no costs for maintaining the transmission lines and equipment. The writer even stated solar is cheap if we have policies that help with upfront costs. If solar were treated on a level playing field with the other forms of electricity production, it would not be cost effective. Hence, the mandate by the state on percentage of new generation required as renewables. Ever wonder why your electric bill is a little higher these days, you can thank these government mandates. Efficiency may be improving but it is still sub-par and unsustainable.

Steven Mosteller, Hamptonville
A member of EnergyUnited

Editor's note: North Carolina no longer offers a tax credit for renewable energy projects, but the federal government does. The N.C. tax credit expired for most projects at the end of 2015. Also, not all utilities are required to purchase power at the retail rate from all renewable projects.

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An old red Pony makes friends

by Bruce R. Boehmke

One day about six years ago, while my son and I were walking in the woods near our home in Carrboro, tucked way back off the road and hidden from passing traffic we found an old red tractor. The moment I saw it something stirred in me, and I knew this old beast and I would be together for a while.

I was a recent retiree and transplant from Philadelphia, lived in a townhome, had no experience with engines or tractors, and had no business whatsoever thinking I could own, let alone restore, a tractor. It was to become a classic "fish out of water" story. And so, much to my wife's chagrin, I bought the "Pony" (a 1952 Massey Harris), for $50 from the landowner, thus beginning a very educational and rewarding five-year journey of life lessons and restoration.

The first thing I learned was that sometimes just plunging ahead forces one to find solutions. Through a friend, George, I was introduced to Gene Johnston and his wife, Lynne, who not knowing me at all, amazingly offered space at their home for the Pony and me. Gene has not only lent a hand, but his vast collection of tools to help me bring the Pony back to life.

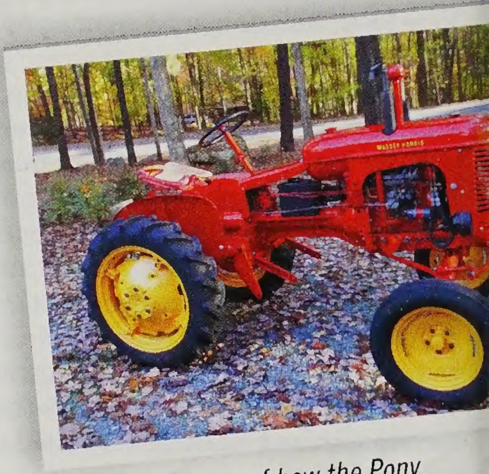
Lynne never complained as the Pony and I wormed our way from outside next to the garage to a nice warm spot inside, all the while supplying encouragement and her photo skills to document the Pony's progress. And as rewarding as the Pony's restoration has been, these new friends have been the best reward.

During the restoration I posted regular reports to a blog, which thanks to my wife, Cyndy, came to be titled "That Idiotic Tractor" (thatidiotictractor.com).

The blog brought me closer to friends and family from whom I'd drifted. And it brought people into my life I'd never known before, like the organic produce farmer up in Canada who owns a Pony, and thanks to me was able to get a clutch clearance measurement he needed. And from an online tractor forum, I got all kinds of suggestions, some very helpful and some downright scary. How about the guy who suggested that in order to get a stuck piston loose I should "fill the cylinder with diesel (fuel), add a splash of gas, set the mixture on fire, (and) drink a cup of Coffee while it burns itself out."

Luckily, the tractor did not burn up, and I've still got my wonderful friends, even some new ones. Gene and Lynne's granddaughter even spoke "Bruce's tractor!" as a few of her first words!

Bruce Boehmke lives in Carrboro and is a member of Piedmont Electric.



Here's a picture of how the Pony looks today out in Gene and Lynne's driveway.

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- Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you want anything returned.
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- To submit: email to editor@carolinacountry.com ("Inspiration" in the subject line) or online at carolinacountry.com/contact

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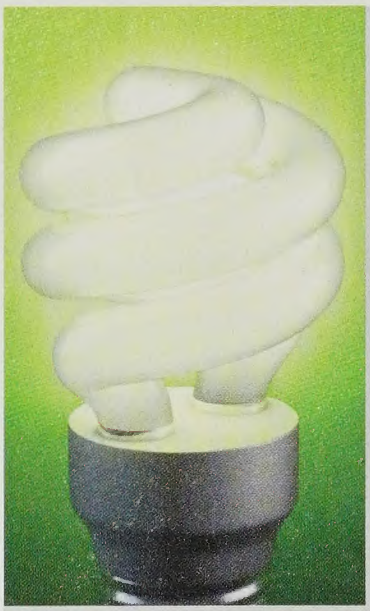

Bright Ideas grants top $10 million in North Carolina

North Carolina's network of electric cooperatives collectively has contributed $10.2 million to classrooms statewide through Bright Ideas grants. Grants have funded innovative, hands-on classroom projects statewide for more than 20 years.

Bright Ideas grants are awarded by each of North Carolina's electric cooperatives to local teachers. The grants fund creative learning projects in all subject areas and are available to Tar Heel teachers in grades K–12.

North Carolina's 26 electric co-ops awarded 585 Bright Ideas grants worth $610,000 in 2015, which pushed the cumulative total for funding contributed to our state's classrooms to $10.2 million. Over the life of the grant program, more than 9,800 projects have received funding statewide, directly benefiting more than 2 million students.

Bright Ideas grant applications are accepted annually from April through September and can be found at ncbrightideas.com.

U.S. Supreme Court puts Clean Power Plan on hold

For months, the most important regulatory development North Carolina's electric cooperatives have been following is the Clean Power Plan proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This proposal sought to reduce carbon emissions from power plants nationwide by making power plants more efficient, switching from coal generation to natural gas or renewable generation, and using energy efficiency measures to reduce electricity demand.

Since the Clean Power Plan was first proposed, North Carolina's electric cooperatives have been working to develop a plan for contributing to North Carolina's compliance efforts under the Clean Power Plan, reduce the impact the Clean Power Plan has on power bills, and protect North Carolina's electric cooperatives' ability to provide electric power whenever needed.

On Feb. 9, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered that the implementation of the Clean Power Plan be put on hold until legal challenges are resolved. A federal appeals court has scheduled arguments on its legality for June. Although it could be mid-2017 or later before the final decision, it is an important development because it will provide guidance on whether the EPA has authority to require states to comply with the Clean Power Plan.

North Carolina's electric cooperatives have always valued a diverse and environmentally responsible power portfolio that includes nuclear, natural gas and renewables. More than half of the power provided by North Carolina's electric cooperatives comes from emissions-free nuclear energy. NC electric cooperatives offer members a range of energy-saving options, including pay as you go and budgeting billing, usage alerts, and energy management tools such as SmartHub. Many of the state's electric cooperatives are now offering community solar to members (see Viewpoints, page 4). Read more about the energy innovations North Carolina's electric cooperatives are offering in "Innovation: an expectation shared by cooperatives & members," pages 14–15.

As this issue works its way through the courts, NC electric cooperatives will continue to work with policy leaders on energy issues affecting members. The goal is to ensure that regulations and legislation support a balanced portfolio and allow the electric cooperatives to continue to provide safe, affordable and reliable power in an environmentally responsible way.

Cooperative-backed Electrify Africa Act becomes law

President Obama signed the Electrify Africa Act into law in February. Supported by National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and America's electric cooperatives, the Act will bring electricity to 50 million people in Africa south of the Sahara Desert.

"Passage of the Act is something all cooperatives can be proud of, not only because it will bring opportunity to impoverished communities, but also because this act was signed in a time of political stagnation," said Nelle Hotchkiss, senior vice president of corporate relations of North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives. "This demonstrates the power of the cooperative network and the passion behind the cooperative purpose."

NRECA strongly backed the bipartisan measure and worked for it for more than three years as part of its international program. NRECA's international affiliate—NRECA International—has worked in developing countries since 1962. Its global commitment has provided electricity to more than 110 million people in 43 countries.

"We are celebrating this achievement with all our members, because our domestic and international work has always focused on power distribution and making it possible for people to have direct access to electricity," said NRECA interim CEO Jeffrey Connor.

"This new law makes it possible to have a significant impact on the lives of millions, and we are proud to be part of this worthwhile effort to bring power to sub-Saharan Africa," he added.

The law encourages public-private partnerships through the Agency for International Development, the Overseas Private Investment Corp., the World Bank and other organizations. It emphasizes increasing access to electric service for households, businesses and small industries and increasing power generation using diverse fuel sources, such as oil, natural gas, coal, hydroelectric, wind, solar and geothermal. It also requires the administration to come up with a long-term plan for powering Africa.

—ECT.coop

Nation's electric cooperatives launch Co-ops Vote Initiative

America's electric cooperatives have launched a non-partisan, nationwide effort to promote civic engagement and voter participation in the communities they serve.

Jeffrey Connor, interim CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), unveiled the Co-ops Vote program at the association's 74th annual meeting in New Orleans. For more news from the NRECA annual meeting, see pages 16–17.

"Through Co-ops Vote, we want to help our members know when elections are, what's at stake and how to make their voices heard," Connor said. "Who folks vote for isn't really as important as the fact that they do vote."

A new website, vote.coop, offers co-op members information on the voter registration process in their state, dates of elections and information on the candidates running in those elections.

In keeping with its non-partisan goals, the initiative will not be endorsing specific candidates for office.

NRECA president Mel Coleman said the program would help ensure the voices of rural Americans are heard. "We want to make sure our government knows that rural America matters," Coleman said. "This campaign isn't about divisive, partisan issues. It's about real people in real places facing real challenges. It's about our co-ops living out the principles of our movement: Concern for community and democratic control."

Coleman added: "When our parents and grandparents set out to electrify rural America, they didn't have time to ask the person next to them about their views on economic or social policy. Their economic policy was 'we need to save this community' and their social policy was 'let's do it together.' I hope the Co-ops Vote program can help rekindle that spirit of cooperation."

—Justin LaBerge, Straight Talk Alert

Summer program helps bridge hunger gap through free meals

Sponsors sought

This past summer, North Carolina had 2,208 summer nutrition sites where children could receive nutritious meals at no cost through the Summer Food Service Program. However, School Nutrition Services Chief Lynn Harvey reported that only 10 out of every 100 economically disadvantaged students in North Carolina received meals during the summer in 2015 and that the need for sponsoring agencies and sites is at an all-time high.

In addition to public school districts, the program allows qualifying public and private nonprofits to be a sponsor and receive federal reimbursement. The meals must be served to eligible children 18 years of age or younger, at an approved site, at no charge to them. Meals may be prepared on site if the kitchen is adequately equipped, or sponsors may contract with a vendor to buy prepared meals.

To learn how to get involved
childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov
and type in "SFSP" or email
cynthia.ervin@dpi.nc.gov

To find a site serving summer meals
Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE
whyhunger.org/find-food

Touchstone Energy Sports Camp participants honored

Many of the 2015 Touchstone Energy scholarship winners to the Wolfpack Women's basketball camp last summer were honored at the NC State vs. UNC women's basketball game on Jan. 31 (held at Broughton High School in Raleigh while NCSU's Reynolds Coliseum is under renovation). North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives also presented a $15,750 check to the Wolfpack women's basketball program in support of the upcoming 2016 summer basketball camp scholarships.

"We plan together. We stay safe together."
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North Carolina's only statewide newspaper launches

NORTH STATE JOURNAL

At a time when most newspapers are cutting staff and crying "digital," one Raleigh group of entrepreneurs say North Carolina is primed for a statewide, in-depth print newspaper. The North State Journal launched in February and captures the unique character of North Carolina.

"The North State Journal elevates the conversation and fills a void in the media landscape, particularly for readers in counties where the local paper has gone weekly," said Neal Robbins, publisher. "It brings readers the news from Raleigh and Charlotte, but also from Murphy to Manteo."

With characters around every corner in North Carolina, elections approaching and economic recovery on everyone's mind, editors say a daily newspaper for the whole state can change the game. The newspaper is delivered to doorsteps and racks five days a week: Tuesday through Friday, plus Sunday. It covers state and national news, sports and features stories statewide.

"The North State Journal is in full color and on thick, broadsheet paper with the beautiful images and rich stories that make this such a remarkable place," said Donna King, news editor. "Our network of writers and photographers cover the news from every corner of the state."

The editors of the paper all grew up in North Carolina and say they want to bring the beauty of this place to life in the newspaper's design, colors and stories.

"We are really taking readers beyond the box scores," said sports editor Will Brinson. "We are focusing on all the teams that North Carolinians follow, not your nearest campus. The sports section gives readers a deeper dive on the big issues and big personalities on the court or the field."

North State of Mind is the features section and the heart of the newspaper. Features editor Jennifer Wood says it will serve as "a cultural compass, to engage readers and encourage them to explore all that makes North Carolina a way of life."

Readers can also look forward to a balanced view of pressing issues of the day in the North Statement.

"In our opinion section, we want to give our readers the whole story when it comes to the major topics of the day, and let them share their ideas to improve our state and nation," said Drew Elliot, opinion editor.

To learn more about the North State Journal, visit NSJonline.com.

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Try This!

PEVS

How electric vehicles compare to gas-fed cars, trucks

By Brian Sloboda

On average, the fuel cost per mile for an electrically powered car is about one-third the cost of driving a gasoline-powered car.

The electric vehicle market is evolving and maturing. Although the concept of electrically powered vehicles was pioneered more than a century ago, only recently have they become a viable vehicle choice for most Americans.

Since the launch of the Chevrolet Volt and Nissan LEAF in 2010, growth of the plug-in electric vehicle (PEV) market has been exponential with more than 215,600 PEVs added to American roadways. Although PEVs still represent just a sliver (0.38 percent) of the total cars in the U.S., drivers' attitudes towards electric vehicles are changing. A recent Consumer Reports study found that 60 percent of Americans would consider a PEV when making their next vehicle purchase.

Electric vehicles are designed to either supplement an internal combustion engine (ICE) or eliminate the need for an ICE altogether. Electric vehicle system components generally include a battery for energy storage, electric motor for propulsion, mechanical transmission and power control system.

A primary benefit of PEVs is that trips to the gas station are either vastly reduced or eliminated altogether. However, in lieu of gas refueling, PEVs need to be recharged by plugging into the electric grid.

Electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) is the technical term for a PEV charging station. EVSE ensures that a safe and appropriate amount of electrical energy is delivered to the PEV from an electricity source.

AC (alternating current) Level 1 charging infrastructure, which is used for most residential PEV charging, is minimal, involving just one cord that connects the PEV to an electrical outlet on a dedicated 110 Volt 15 or 20 Amp circuit.

AC Level 2 and DC (direct current) Level 3 charging stations have more complex infrastructure requirements that can be costly. They range from a minimum total cost of $650 to a maximum of $80,400, depending on the application.

Maintenance, upkeep

All-electric vehicles do not have conventional transmissions or petroleum-fueled engines—making maintenance and upkeep generally cheaper than for an ICE vehicle. One study found that the maintenance costs of PEVs are approximately 35 percent lower than those of comparable gasoline-powered vehicles.

However, battery replacement can be very expensive should it be required before the end of the vehicle's life. Pricing for the Nissan Leaf battery currently starts around $5,499.

As Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs) have internal combustion engines, maintenance costs and regularity falls somewhere between all-electric and conventional vehicles. The Chevy Volt oil change interval is 30,000 miles, significantly extended over the 5,000-mile interval for ICE vehicles. The regenerative braking feature of PHEVs also reduces brake wear, and the PEV electrical system (battery, motor and associated electronics) typically requires minimal maintenance.

Servicing PEVs can require specialized technical skills and tools, leaving PEV owners to rely on dealers for servicing. This may be unappealing for car owners who prefer to use a local mechanic or service their vehicle themselves.

Costs

On average, the fuel cost per mile for an electrically powered car is about one-third the cost of driving a gasoline-powered car.

As PEV battery costs drop and charging infrastructure expands—it is likely that PEVs will become a mainstream vehicle choice for many Americans within the next few decades. PEVs offer fuel cost per mile savings for most drivers and can also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Brian Sloboda is a technical research analyst specializing in energy efficiency and renewable energy for the Business Technology Strategies (BTS), a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

For more information on how to save energy, including a virtual house tour, go to TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

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BETWEEN THE LINES

Explaining the business of your electric cooperative

INNOVATION

An expectation shared by cooperatives & members

35%
72
72
ecobee

Connected thermostats allow co-op members to control the temperature of their home remotely. In pilot programs, the thermostats have also helped cooperatives save significant costs by scaling back power usage in moments when electricity is most expensive.

Ding. An alert from your electric cooperative chimes to let you know your energy use is above normal.

You open your co-op's app on your phone or log into an energy portal online to investigate. The spike in electricity consumed could represent a change in your daily routine or something more significant, like a failing appliance or continuously running device. Regardless, you've identified—in a moment—that there's an issue and can take steps to correct it quickly.

Electric cooperatives are able to offer meaningful services like high usage alerts and real-time energy data because of sophisticated technology integrated into their systems. Each of North Carolina's 26 electric cooperatives is locally owned and operated, and the programs and services offered are matched to the unique needs of local members.

Although some needs vary, one point holds true: All electric cooperatives are focused on best serving their members. As members' needs and expectations change, cooperatives innovate to bring new solutions to those members.

These innovations are possible because of our purpose, our knowledge and an underlying, modern metering technology called Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). In North Carolina, and across the nation, electric cooperatives lead in the deployment of these meters, which measure energy use and transmit information in almost real-time.

This technology is used to design programs that give electric cooperative members insight to understand their energy use. 'Education' is a cooperative principle, and co-ops are committed to providing members with knowledge to make informed decisions about their energy habits. Examples of some of the programs provided by co-ops and rooted in this technology are:

Pay-As-You-Go Options

This program allows cooperative members to pay up front for electricity with smaller, more frequent transactions rather than waiting for a monthly bill. Similar to a prepaid cell phone, this concept puts members in control of their budgets and energy consumption.

Energy Management Portals & Apps

Online energy management portals and cell phone apps allow members to track daily and hourly energy use. Some systems overlay outdoor factors that can influence energy use including temperature, cloud cover and wind speed.

Usage Alerts

The technology incorporated by many electric cooperatives gives members the ability to set up email and text message alerts if energy use approaches a designated threshold. This keeps members on budget and eliminates any surprises that could come on the next bill.

Exploring Trends

All cooperative innovation is spurred by a purpose to serve the needs of members, which means innovation extends beyond managing energy use and into the bigger energy picture. Co-ops are known for studying trends in the power industry and adopting technology and business practices that make sense for their members.

As concepts that could benefit members emerge, like distributed energy resources and Internet-connected devices, electric cooperatives often pilot programs that blend these emerging technologies with the traditional goal of providing members with reliable and affordable electricity. Examples include community solar farms, the deployment of connected thermostats and even the exploration of microgrids.

By the end of 2016, more than 20 community solar farms will be online

Community solar farms are one of many ways that North Carolina's electric cooperatives are innovating to meet members' needs and expectations.

in electric cooperative service areas in North Carolina. Community solar projects make participating in the solar energy movement accessible to all cooperative members, without the challenges of installing rooftop systems.

Along the same lines, North Carolina's electric cooperatives are working with their power supplier to test the concept of microgrids in two locations. Microgrids are sections of the power grids that can operate independently from the larger grid in an emergency situation or when independence could mean cost savings, but they typically remain connected to ensure reliable service. These two projects will allow the state's cooperatives to learn more and test possibilities for incorporating microgrids into future strategies to make the system more resilient and sustainable while also helping members reduce their energy use and costs.

Another option being introduced to some cooperative members is the idea of connected thermostats. Members have the convenience of adjusting the temperature of their home remotely, and it also allows them to participate in cooperative-lead efforts to scale back on energy use during times of peak demand when electricity is most expensive. The cooperative can send signals to the thermostats to run a few degrees cooler or higher (depending upon the season), and collectively, these thermostats offer real savings to members.

"Cooperation among cooperatives" is a founding cooperative principle, and the co-ops currently participating in these cutting-edge programs are sharing their knowledge with their electric cooperative peers to determine if similar programs could be a fit locally.

As member-owned, not-for-profit utilities, North Carolina's electric cooperatives will continue to innovate and connect with members in ways that match local needs and expectations. Electric cooperatives are driven by people, not profits, and improving the quality of life for members is a priority.

Visit EmpowerMeNC.com to discover the innovative energy services and solutions offered by your electric cooperative.

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Bill Available
Your Electric bill is available for the following accounts.
Hourly Usage

Online energy management portals, like SmartHub, allow members to track daily and hourly energy use.

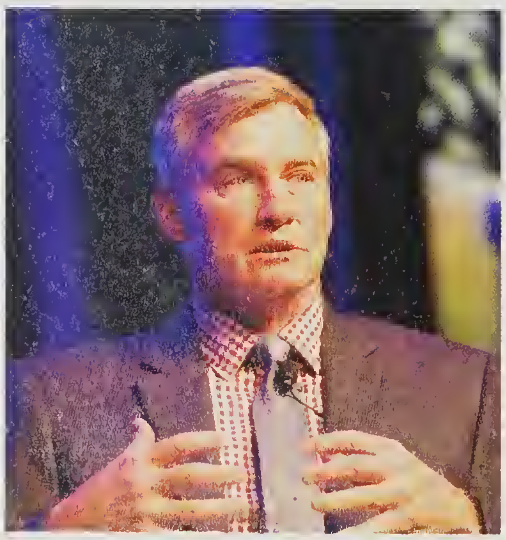
Randolph EMC CEO Dale Lambert (second from right) and Roanoke Electric COO Marshall Cherry (far right) discuss how to grow a cooperative's ACRE program.

National convention discusses
'The next greatest thing'

At the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA) 74th annual meeting in New Orleans in February, more than 6,000 representatives of the nation's electric cooperatives and allied organizations brainstormed what they consider "the next greatest thing" for electric cooperatives.

Artist Heather Klar brought ideas such as youth, diversity, technology, member engagement, community and competition to life with markers and canvas for attendees to ponder.

The next greatest thing engagement continued when representatives came together to set policy, discuss issues affecting their business, attend education forums on the changing energy industry landscape and conduct elections and awards at the three-day event. The Ernest N. Morial Convention Center hosted the annual meetings of national organizations that serve financial, insurance, branding, technology and other electric cooperative interests. Education forums focused on a variety on topics, including the changing landscape for cooperative power supply, tech trends, cyber security, co-op solar strategies, the upcoming national elections, the cooperatives' vital role growing the rural economy and how electric cooperatives play the role of trusted energy advisor for members.



NCEMC CEO Joe Brannan served as a panelist in discussions on energy and tech trends as well as cooperatives being the trusted energy advisor for their members.

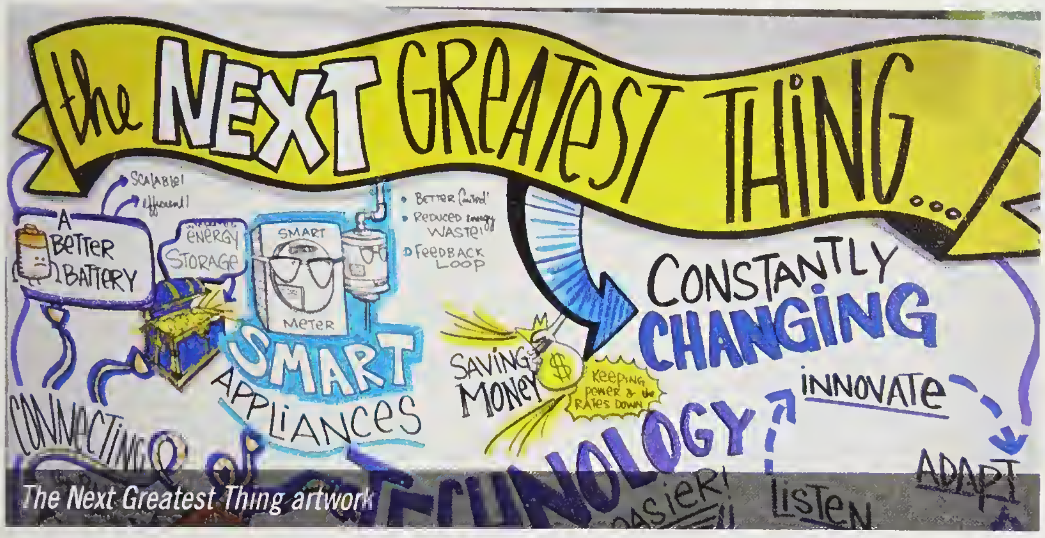
NRECA interim CEO Jeffrey Connor expressed optimism that investments in technology and in the next generation of co-op leaders will sustain cooperatives as the electric utility sector undergoes tremendous change.

"Being a co-op means being a trusted energy advisor to meet changing consumer expectations with solutions like community solar and community storage; being a partner in exciting new technologies from the smart grid to the smart home. Being a co-op means being an innovative employer for the veterans returning home and millennials coming back to communities where they grew up," said Connor.

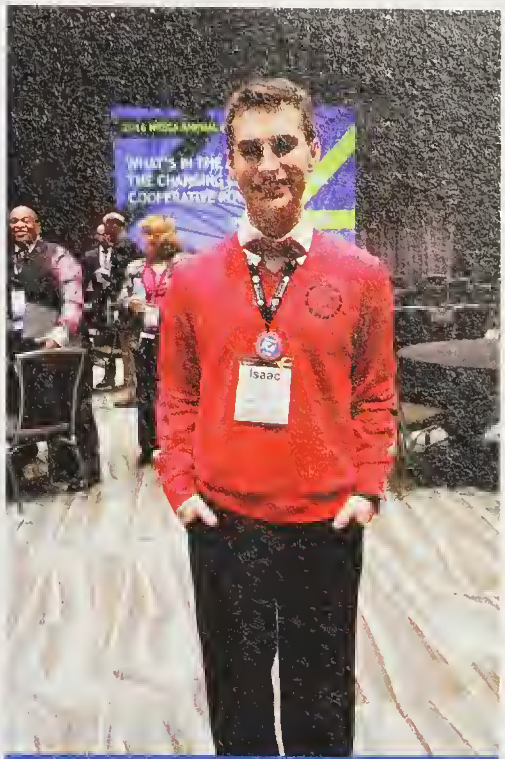
"What hasn't changed," Connor continued, "is the way we meet our future head-on, with a firm understanding of who we are, what we can do, and how we can cooperate to do it together."

U.S. Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack told the audience that co-ops are the key to the economic vitality of rural America. He pointed out the USDA's Rural Economic Loan and Grant program partnership with co-ops across the nation have brought 34,500 much-needed jobs since he became secretary, with $365 million invested in businesses and more than 1,300 businesses and community projects benefitting from this partnership. The energy efficiency and conservation effort within the partnership has led to 10 billion kilowatts saved so far. He cited the role of North Carolina's electric cooperatives in utilizing both the loan and efficiency programs.

Just prior to the meeting, more than 100 volunteers from 40 of the nation's electric cooperatives joined forces with Rebuilding Together New Orleans (RTNO) to make repairs to five homes in the city's Gentilly and Carrollton neighborhoods. Volunteer teams built wheelchair ramps, painted, repaired fences and made energy-efficient upgrades to the homes as part of the annual Touchstone Energy community



The Next Greatest Thing artwork



Blue Ridge Electric Youth Tourist Isaac Tuttle assisted during several education forums by gathering questions from the audience for the panelists to answer. "Being a Youth Tourist is a great experience, especially given the opportunity to represent my state at the NRECA annual meeting. The meeting allowed me to connect with new people and learn more about the cooperatives."

More than 100 cooperative representatives volunteered to repair homes in two New Orleans neighborhoods.

service project. Representatives from North Carolina's Pee Dee Electric and EnergyUnited took part in the project.

North Carolina participates in discussion

North Carolina's electric cooperatives were recognized for the second-highest number of ACRE members in the nation. ACRE, or the Action Committee for Rural Electrification, is the federal Political Action Committee (PAC) facilitated by NRECA. It supports candidates in the U.S. House and Senate who will speak for and protect the interests of electric cooperatives and their member-owners.

"Our electric cooperative board members and employees are dedicated to ensuring cooperative members are represented by individuals locally and in Congress for all," said Nelle Hotchkiss, senior vice president of corporate relations at the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives. "With this strong foundation of support, we now look to extend the opportunity to our cooperative members and through education, we hope to engage them in the political process."

Marshall Cherry, COO of Roanoke Electric Cooperative, and Dale Lambert, CEO of Randolph EMC, served as panelists at the ACRE education forum on how to grow ACRE membership. Lambert also paneled a discussion on the changing landscape of power supply and how rural cooperatives stay ahead of these changes. Lambert commented that "flexibility and diversity are the keys to working within the changing landscape, and cooperatives must be the trusted energy advisor for their members and all things energy."

N.C. representatives who also served on education forum panels included Joe Brannan, CEO of North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC) and Mike Burnette, senior vice president and COO of NCEMC. Both took part in sessions focused on energy and tech trends and the discussion on how and why cooperatives must be member-focused.

At the Consumer vs. Kilowatts: Being the Trusted Energy Advisor for Your Members forum, Brannan stated that cooperatives must reach out and communicate on all energy subjects, especially the difficult ones. "If you say 'these are all the options. Let me share with you information that will help you make a decision,' you increase and enrich the trust that you have with your members." — *Renee C. Gannon*

NC Electric Cooperatives receive safety awards

During the meeting, the following North Carolina cooperatives received the Certificate of Achievement for their safety records:

Albemarle EMC, Blue Ridge Electric, Brunswick EMC, Cape Hatteras Electric, Carteret-Craven Electric, Central EMC, Edgecombe-Martin County EMC, EnergyUnited, Four County EMC, Halifax EMC, Haywood EMC, Jones-Onslow EMC, Lumbee River EMC, Pee Dee Electric, Piedmont Electric, Pitt & Greene EMC, Randolph EMC, Roanoke Electric, Rutherford EMC, South River EMC, Surry-Yadkin EMC, Tideland EMC, Tri-County EMC Union Power Cooperative and Wake EMC.

Grandma Scruggs, third from left

Those wonderful "poppy biscuits"

Growing up as a child of parents of sharecroppers in the 1930s and 1940s, my greatest desire was going to my grandma Lula Scruggs' house. We didn't get to go often due to the approximately 4½ miles of walking. A long way for a child, but my thoughts were on the "poppy" biscuits I knew she had awaiting us children in the bottom drawer of her wood cook stove. She always put every leftover biscuit in that drawer where they dehydrated and kept for months. The first thing we did after saying hello was go to the stove for a "poppy" biscuit. They were the favorite goodie of all us grandchildren. She was a widow with three children still at home. Times were very hard in those days, but us children didn't know of such things. There was nothing I looked forward to more than grandma's "poppy" biscuits.

Rosite Jones, Dallas, Rutherford EMC

"He said a bad word!"

(In loving memory of Frank Ray Sawyer)

As a little girl growing up, most of my favorite memories are of my Papaw Frank. There is one memory in particular that always makes me smile when I think about it.

My Papaw Frank kept me through the week while my parents worked. I suppose I was around 4 or 5 at the time. He was a good Christian man and always set a good example in front of me. He tried to teach me right from wrong. One of those lessons was about how I shouldn't say "bad" words.

Papaw was a deacon at Pine Grove Mountain Union Baptist Church. Many Sunday's my mother would get me all dressed up in a dress my Mamaw Lola had made me. We lived close to them and she would take me to their house on Sunday mornings. Papaw never drove, so when it was a pretty day he and I would set out walking to church. I remember him holding my hand as we walked. The church was only about a half mile at the most from his house. Oh, but how I enjoyed those walks with him.

After we had gotten to church one Sunday, it was time for preaching to begin. The preacher's sermon that day was on "hell." So of course while delivering his message, the word "hell" was spoken. Apparently I remembered Papaw's lesson about the "bad" words. When I heard the word, I stood up and announced to everyone at church ..." He said a bad word," while pointing my finger at the preacher. Some of the people at church began to chuckle. I didn't understand why and Papaw Frank smiled at me and told me it was okay. On our walk home, he explained to me about why it wasn't a bad word when the preacher said it.

His example and the lessons he taught me are a big part of why I accepted Christ at the young age of 13. He was unable to go to church at that time because his deteriorating health. But I couldn't wait to get to his house that day and tell him the good news. It wasn't very long after that, he passed away. Even though I am a grown woman and a grandmother myself now, I still remember him. There is a part of me that will always miss him, but I know I will join him again in heaven one day, where there will be no "bad" words ever heard.

Rhonda Sawyer Testerman, Warrensville
Blue Ridge Electric

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Clarence Foust and the NC Ramblers in 1923

The Night Crawlers, my husband's first band

The unsung hero

Recently my husband picked up the guitar again after about a 30-year hiatus. As he picked and strummed the strings, the memories of years past sang a tune of wonderful reminiscence.

He started playing at a young age and it took him no time to be the lead guitar player in his first band—the Night Crawlers. With the Night Crawlers, he and his brother and a few good friends played by ear, having no formal music training. They played in local venues mostly for fun.

Some of my husband's best memories come from learning song after song in the home of Clarence Foust, a musician belonging at one time to the famous North Carolina Ramblers. Founded by Charlie Poole in the early 1900s, the North Carolina Ramblers sound was distinct. Using the guitar for melody and a bluesy fiddle lead, the group set the tone for long lasting hit songs to last the years. Clarence Foust started off with the band, but was later replaced by another guitarist. Even though he did not stay long with the band, he leaves his impression in other ways nonetheless.

Clarence Foust was born in 1894 and was a resident of Efland, NC. My husband tells of the days he and his friends would to go to old Clarence's house and he'd teach them how to play song after song on the guitar. He only asked them to bring along a six pack of beer for the fun. Yes, Clarence grew up during the days of prohibition and moonshining, so Clarence had a taste for the alcohol. His wife did not approve, so he told the boys to keep it a secret from her as she would leave the house anyway when the boys came over.

Perhaps it's this one thread of history that brings my husband pride to have been a part of something greater than him. He offers a small piece of his own legacy to the deep roots of our North Carolina history. His music brings him solace and he speaks daily now with his guitar.

I could not thank Clarence Foust enough for planting the seed of such a deep appreciation for music and how it brings our family together. I don't think he knew at the time how much of a difference he could make by just taking time to share music with this young group of boys.

Margaret & Charles Bradshaw, Efland, Piedmont Electric

Berry business

The eight children in the neighborhood had been on a woodland adventure. They had enjoyed berries on their trip because there was purple juice on their mouths, hands and clothes. At first I thought they had enjoyed a few blackberries. But, the purple was too bright and the stain too deep. With horror, I realized they had probably discovered the pokeberries along the creek bank.

They took me to the berry patch, and I knew for sure we were going to need some medical assistance. I had heard that pokeberries were poisonous, and they were not to be eaten. I sat the children on the couch like a bunch of crows on a power line. They were crying and promising never to eat wild berries again. We called the doctor. He advised ipecac to induce vomiting and save lives. One by one the children took their ipecac as they cried out: "We are going to die."

The medication worked on all but one child. It worked on him as he was attending Wednesday night services at his church. When the fathers arrived, they went to check the berry patch. They reported the berries were elderberries and EDIBLE.

Judy Morris, West Jefferson, Blue Ridge Electric

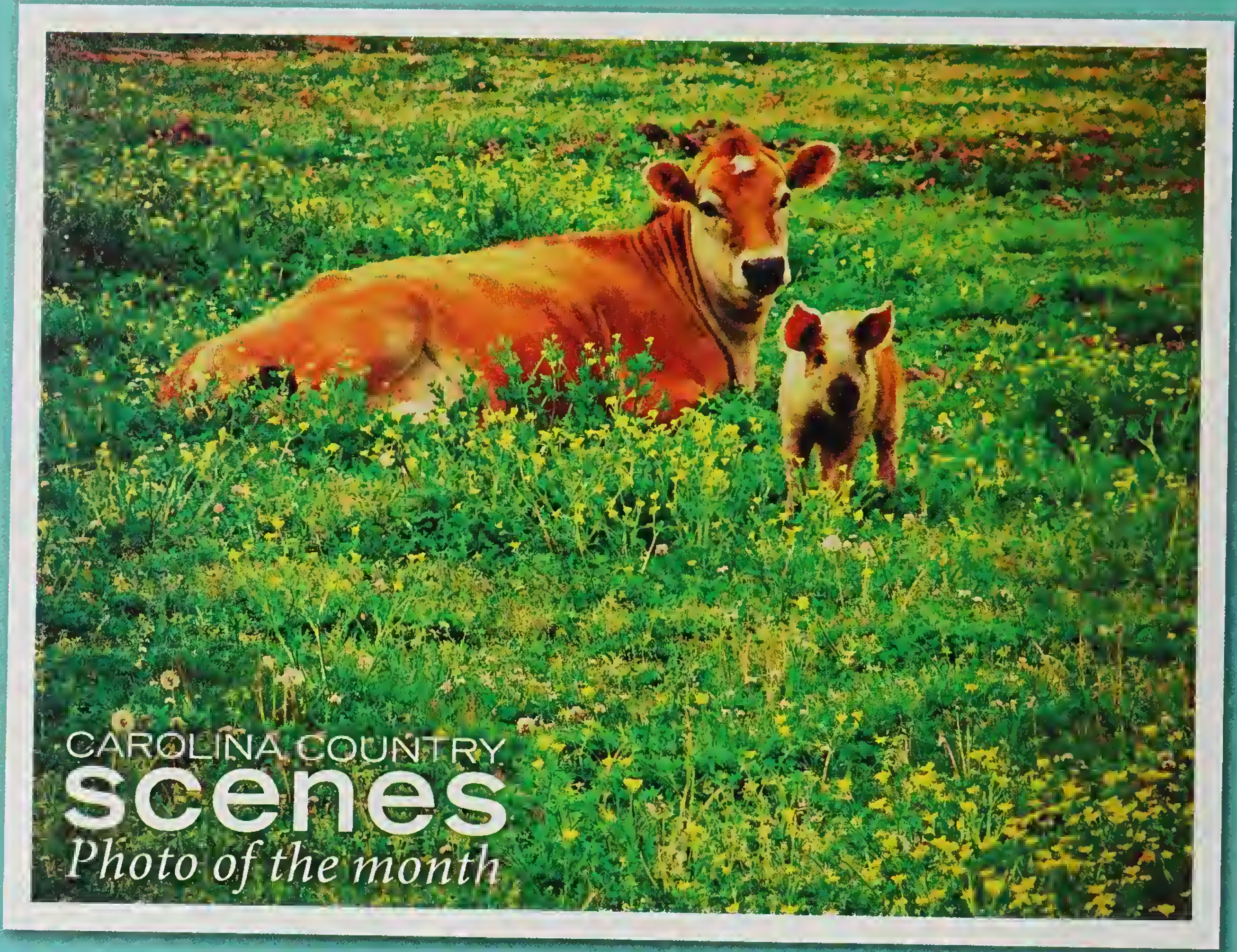
My fishing adventure

When I was 10 years old (I'm in my 90s now), my uncle Jack, Dad and I went on a fishing trip. Uncle Jack worked for a timber company and knew of a good spot on the Wateree River to fish. We arrived before sunset and set out our lines to catch catfish. Then we started a fire to cook the fish. We had a good catch and a good meal.

I remember we had an open coffee pot on the fire. My uncle took a gulp of coffee and then spit it out. He wiped his mouth and said, "Gosh, this coffee is lumpy." This made us all curious. He poured some coffee on a board, and we bent over to look and yep, it was lumpy. There were beetles in it. Brown boiled bugs. The beetles were attracted by the light of the fire and fell in the open coffee pot. I have often wondered how many of those lumps he swallowed.

And I've often thought how glad I am that I was then too young for coffee!

Carl Dowdey, Stanfield



Babes and the Pig

These two are inseparable best friends. My heifer Babes tries to root the ground like the pig, and Piggy tries everything Babes does, including licking the mineral block! I have never seen anything like it!

Grace Balance, Newton Grove, South River EMC

The Photo of the Month comes from those that scored an honorable mention from the judges in our 2016 photo contest ("Carolina Country Scenes," February 2016). See even more at the Photo of the Week on our website **carolinacountry.com**.

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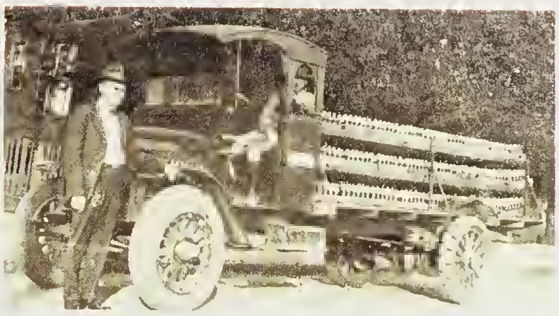
Cheerwine
LEGEND

The birth of a beverage



OK, so you probably know that Pepsi was concocted in New Bern. But do you know that Cheerwine was invented in Salisbury? Born in 1866, North Carolina native and founder Lewis D. Peeler tried his hand at a number of enterprises, including farming and wholesaling, before establishing the Carolina Beverage Corporation in 1913.

That year, Peeler and other Rowan County businessmen started a bottling franchise with Mint Cola in the basement of Peeler's general store in Salisbury. In 1917, he introduced the soft drink Cheerwine. Peeler wanted to produce a beverage that used less sugar due to rationing concerns from World War I. He named the beverage "cheer" for pleasure and "wine" for its deep red color, and the sparkling soda quickly turned up lips. Today, Cheerwine remains a family business. Peeler died in 1931 and his great-grandson Cliff Ritchie now leads the company.

Field Trip!

Town Creek Indian Mound

For more than a thousand years, Indians lived an agricultural life on lands that became North Carolina. During the 11th century A.D., a new cultural tradition emerged in the Pee Dee River Valley. Called "Pee Dee" by archaeologists, it was part of a widespread tradition known as "South Appalachian Mississippian." Throughout Georgia, South Carolina, eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, and the southern North Carolina Piedmont, the culture gave rise to complex societies.

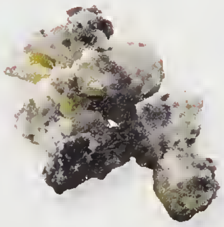
Indians of the Pee Dee culture built earthen mounds for their spiritual and political leaders, traded widely, supported crafts and celebrated a new kind of religion. You can learn about their culture at Town Creek Indian Mound, where they built a political and ceremonial center on a low bluff overlooking the confluence of Town Creek and Little River.

The reconstructed village site is 5.5 miles from Mount Gilead in Montgomery County. It includes a townhouse atop a man-made earthen mound, an east lodge, a mortuary and a game pole all enclosed with a protective stockade. There's also a modern visitors center, orientation video, exhibits, guided or self-guided tours, picnic area and nature trail. Long the site of fruitful excavations, digging continues on a limited basis but the archaeological focus has shifted to outlying Pee Villages without mounds. 910-439-6802 or towncreekindianmound.com

tar heel lessons

a guide to NC for teachers and students

Fun treat



This recipe is fun for parties, school events or just to surprise those you love. Find more recipes at popcorn.org.

Cookies 'N Cream Popcorn

12 cups popped popcorn
1 package (11 ounces) white chocolate chips
2 teaspoons coconut oil
15 Oreo cookies, coarsely chopped
Paper party cups (optional)

Place popcorn in large bowl; set aside. In medium saucepan on low heat, melt chocolate chips and coconut oil. Stir until blended. Being careful to hold the hot saucepan away from you, pour the melted chocolate and oil over popcorn. Then stir until well-coated. Stir in chopped Oreos.

Spread mixture on baking sheet and chill in the refrigerator until chocolate has set. Break into pieces. For extra visual punch, place pieces into pretty party cups and serve.

Yield: 12 cups

UNSCRAMBLIT

WHERE'S "there" IN OUR STATE?

① Daniel Boone spent his childhood there, fishing in the Yadkin River.

② George Washington visited there in 1791. He called it "a pleasant village".

③ And Andrew Jackson studied law there in the 1880s.

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
b s a r b c l m e

Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.
A B I L R S U Y means
s c r a m b l e

The moving fingers write, but having writ, some writers never know when they should quit.

-cgj

Did you know?

Stanback, the headache relief compound, was created by a Thomasville pharmacist Thomas M. (Dr. Tom) Stanback. Stanback moved to Spencer in 1911 and started commercial production of the powder.

By 1931, Stanback Medicine Company had opened a production facility in Salisbury. The Block Drug Company purchased Stanback's in 1998, 25 years after it purchased B.C. Powders.

Can you rearrange the order of these six North Carolina counties so that their first letters spell out the name of a seventh county in our state?

ALAMANCE GUILFORD NASH
ORANGE SAMPSON TYRELL

MATCHBOXES

	1	3	3	5	4
	N	L	L	P	A
×					4
					A
					6
					E

	1	0	9	7	5	7	4
	N	K	I	O	P	O	A
×							8
							C
							2
							T

Each letter in these multiplication problems stands for the digit above it. Solve the problems and write your answer in the box tops, one digit to each box. Then match boxes to find hidden words in your answers.

For answers, please see page 65.

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By L.A. Jackson

Moonflowers

Delight of the night

The garden by day is beautiful. The garden by night is magical, especially if you include the strange, nocturnal-blooming moonflower (Ipomoea alba). This summer annual strongly resembles its sun-worshipping cousin, the morning glory, but it patiently waits until the evening to put on a show under the stars.

Moonflower seeds (easily found online and at most local garden shops) don't readily germinate, so give a helping hand by either soaking them in water for 48 hours before planting or by scratching a groove in the hard seed cover with a metal file.

If you prefer sooner rather than later when it comes to sprouting moonflowers, they can be started in small pots indoors. Otherwise, simply direct sow the seeds in the garden anytime between the end of April and the middle of May. Plant the seeds a half-inch deep and 3 to 4 feet apart in a sunny garden spot that has rich, well-worked soil. Moonflowers also do quite well in large pots.

These nighttime pretties are sometimes called moonvines because, well, they are vines—capable of stretching up to 15 feet or more in length. Locate them close to something that will support and direct their growth. Trellises or fences are obvious places, but, to get up close and pleasantly personal to the flowers, also consider porch posts and deck rails.

By midsummer, mature plants will begin producing large (4 to 5 inches in diameter), very fragrant, pure white flowers that start to twist open as the day ends. Each blossom only lasts one night, but they make the most of their brief time in the garden. And on moonlit nights, the sight of these ghostly blooms combined with their nocturnal perfume is nothing short of enchanting. In my opinion, the sweet scent from the flowers rivals any found in daylight gardens, and it lingers long enough to greet the rising sun.

Since moonflowers are so closely related to morning glories, a neat garden design trick to try is to interplant the two, and let them tangle their way up a support. Then, when the moonflowers are through with their beautiful "night shift," the morning glories can greet the new day with their own pretty flowers.

Garden To Do's

April

☐ After the flowers of naturalizing bulbs such as crocus, daffodils, hyacinths, ipheion and species tulips fade, allow the foliage to wilt and turn brown before pruning back. While the leaves are green, they continue to absorb energy for next year's flower show.

☐ 'Tis time to fertilize. In particular, established roses, shrubs, perennials and trees will benefit from a wake-up jolt of nutrients early in the month. To minimize this job for the rest of the growing season, use a time-release fertilizer that will slowly send nutrients into the root zone over the next several months.

☐ An all-natural way to fertilize outdoor plants is to mix generous helpings of mature, nutrient-rich compost into growing beds.

May

☐ Now that spring-flowering annuals and bulbs are bloomed out, replant garden beds with colorful annual heat-seekers such as portulaca, celosia, sun coleus, petunias, salvias, marigolds and zinnias.

☐ Continue planting summer veggies. Pole beans, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, eggplant, cucumbers, okra, peppers, watermelons and lima beans can all go into the garden this month.

☐ Worried about indoor pollutants? Spider plant, aloe vera, philodendron and golden pothos are very efficient at helping to clear the air in offices and homes of unhealthy chemical compounds.

L.A. Jackson is the former editor of Carolina Gardener Magazine. lajackson1@gmail.com

Tip of the Month

By the middle to end of May, the water garden should be nicely warmed up in the late spring sun. Hardy water lilies and water lotuses will begin unfurling new leaves, and it will be safe to also include a few fancy tropical water lilies to add even more blooming beauty to the pond.

However, as lovely as these aquatic plants look, they are pigs when it comes to wanting fertilizer, fertilizer and more fertilizer. They best way to feed their needs—and assure maximum bloom production—is to use time-release fertilizer tablets specially made for water lilies and water lotuses. These tablets can normally be found as local garden center and online. The application rate is usually one or two tablets per plant every three to four weeks.

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Home energy audits

You'll learn a lot, can save big money in long run

By Patrick Keegan

If you haven't had a home energy audit yet, it's smart to think about one. Spending a few hundred dollars now can save you thousands of dollars over time.

A home energy audit is a detailed assessment that can meet different needs:

- What efficiency investments will be most effective in reducing your energy bills?
- Are areas of your home sometimes too hot or too cold? An energy audit can identify problems and solutions.
- Are you considering a new furnace, air conditioner or rooftop solar system? An energy audit will help you "right-size" these systems and identify complementary measures to help these large investments work most efficiently.
- Are you selling your home? An energy audit can document your home's efficiency to help improve its resale value.

Online audit tools can give you a basic understanding of how your home compares to similar ones. However, a qualified and professional home energy auditor can use their experience and high-tech tools to provide a more thorough report. A professional energy audit can range from a quick, visual walk-through of the home to a more comprehensive, more informative—but more expensive assessment.

What happens during an inspection

Energy audits require an examination of the building envelope (attic, floor, and exterior walls) and energy systems, such as the water heater, air conditioner and furnace.

Follow the auditor during the inspection, and ask questions to understand where the problems are, what you can address yourself and where you may need further professional help. The auditor may analyze your recent energy bills to determine what your energy is used for and if use has recently changed.

Finally, the auditor will ask about energy use behaviors that affect power bills. For example, is someone home all day, or does everyone leave for work and school?

An auditor may do some or all of the following:

- **Blower door test:** Windows are often the suspected cause for air leaks in the home, but there are usually larger and less obvious sources; a blower door test measures how airtight your home is and identifies where the air leaks are located.
- **Duct blaster:** Ducts move the warm and cool air around your home; duct testing can measure whether your ducts are leaking.
- **Thermographic imaging:** Seth Rosser, an energy advisor at United Cooperative Services in Texas shared, "Identifying where more insulation is needed is a key component in our energy audits—too little insulation will make a member use more energy than needed. Adding more can provide a quick return on investment." Thermographic imaging is one way to identify where more insulation is needed. Infrared images show "cold" spots in a home's envelope.
- **Health and safety testing:** Energy auditors are also trained to spot safety problems, such as an appliance that could cause carbon monoxide issues.

Above, top: *Accompany the auditor and ask lots of questions.*

Above, bottom: *Recommendations can include changing how you use energy, such as turning the thermostat down while you are out.*

Following the assessment, the auditor will make recommendations to reduce energy use and improve comfort. If you take action based on the recommendations, you could lower your energy bill five to thirty percent, and perhaps even more!

Check with your electric co-op first before hiring an auditor. It may have a list of qualified energy auditors in your area or do audits.

This column was written by Pat Keegan, who writes on energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and Amy Wheeless of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on ensuring quality energy efficiency work, visit collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips or email Pat Keegan at energytips@collaborativeefficiency.com.

Breakthrough technology converts phone calls to captions.

New amplified phone lets you hear AND see the conversation.

No Contract
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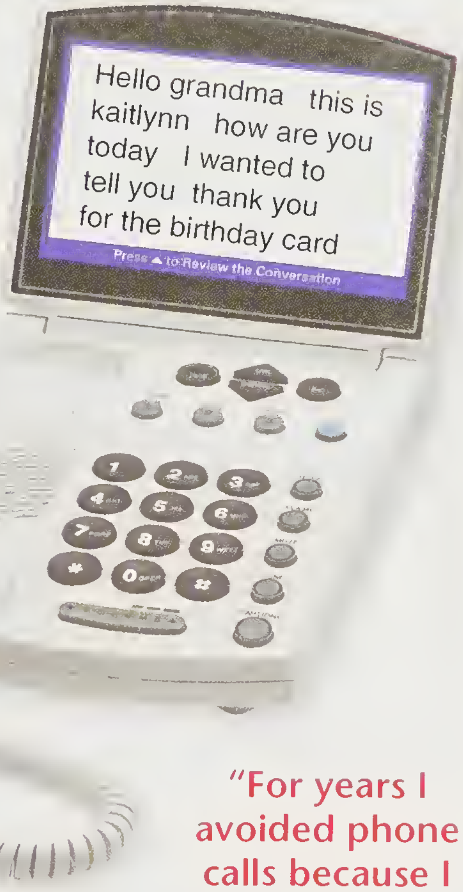
The Captioning Telephone converts phone conversations to easy-to-read captions for individuals with hearing loss.

Do you get discouraged when you hear your telephone ring? Do you avoid using your phone because hearing difficulties make it hard to understand the person on the other end of the line? For many Americans the telephone conversation – once an important part of everyday life – has become a thing of the past. Because they can't understand what is said to them on the phone, they're often cut off from friends, family, doctors and caregivers. Now, thanks to innovative technology there is finally a better way.

A simple idea... made possible with sophisticated technology. If you have trouble understanding a call, the Captioning Telephone can change your life. During a phone call the words spoken to you appear on the phone's screen – similar to closed captioning on TV. So when you make or receive a call, the words spoken to you are not only amplified by the phone, but scroll across the phone so you can listen while reading everything that's said to you. Each call is routed through a call center, where computer technology – aided by a live representative – generates immediate voice-to-text translations. The captioning is real-time, accurate and readable. Your conversation is private and the captioning service doesn't cost you a penny. Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) is regulated and funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and is designed exclusively for individuals with hearing loss. In order to use CTS in your home, you must have standard telephone service and high-speed Internet connectivity where the phone will be used. Callers do not need special equipment or a captioning phone in order to speak with you.

Finally... a phone you can use again. The Captioning Telephone is also packed with features to help make phone calls easier. The keypad has large, easy to use buttons. You get adjustable volume amplification along with the ability to save captions for review later. It even has an answering machine that provides you with the captions of each message.

See for yourself with our exclusive home trial. Try the Captioning Telephone in your own home and if you are not completely amazed, simply return it within 60-days for a refund of the product purchase price. It even comes with a 5-year warranty.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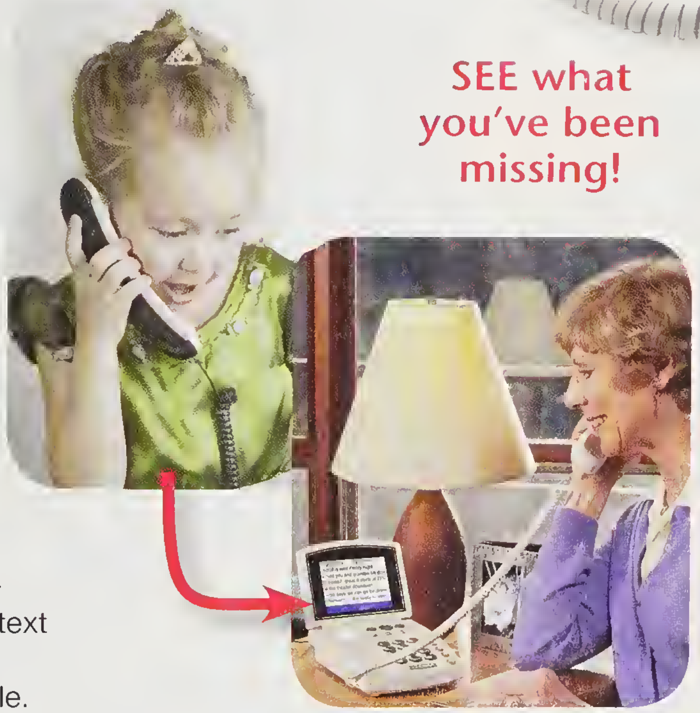

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81112

By Hannah McKenzie

Repairing an HVAC system

Q: The HVAC unit at my home is no longer reliably operating. How do I make sure I'm getting a fair price and quality workmanship?

A: Like car repairs, HVAC repairs can be painfully expensive. And, as with cars, regular maintenance is just as important to maximize system performance and lifespan. As a continuation from last month's article, the first step is to work with a reputable HVAC company.

A second recommendation is to approach this with a view toward teamwork—you are the expert on your home and your contractor is the technical expert on what the equipment can do. Together you can work to meet your comfort and budget needs.

If you have worked with the HVAC company before, it will have a maintenance and repair history of your equipment. If this is a new company, providing maintenance and repair records may help with troubleshooting. When the HVAC repair person arrives at your home, he or she will assess the system and locate the problem.

If you have specific information on what is happening or not happening and when, that may be valuable to share. Standing over their shoulder and talking or asking questions while they work can be intimidating, distracting and irritating at best. Being quiet, giving them space and observing from a distance while being available for questions is often appreciated.

After they have assessed the system and located the problem is when the conversation and teamwork approach should grow. Ask for a detailed description of the problem and the suggested fix, which will make it easier to share the conversation later with your spouse or your dad's friend for a second opinion.

Here are a few questions to consider asking:

- What's the problem? Could maintenance have prevented this?
- Do parts need to be replaced or can the unit be cleaned or tuned?
- How will new parts allow normal operation to be restored?
- What's the expected lifespan of the replaced parts and my HVAC unit? Could the new part cause an existing, older part to break?
- If refrigerant is needed, was the leak fixed? Leaks need to be located and repaired. Adding refrigerant without fixing the source of the problem will guarantee you will need another visit from an HVAC professional in the near future.
- Can you show me? Particularly with a cracked heat exchanger (which means buying a whole new unit!) or other expensive broken parts, ask them to show you the damage in person or in a photograph.

Ask the technician for a detailed description of the problem and the suggested fix.

Ask for a written estimate before any work or payment is made. It should include an itemized list of parts and cost, reasoning for parts replacement, labor charges, any company guarantee/warranty, and any manufacturer warranty. For repairs over $350, a second opinion is advisable.

Similar resources and information can be found on the Air Conditioning Contractors of America Association (ACCA) website, acca.org/homes#quality.

Yes, HVAC repairs can be stressful but with teamwork and clear communication, you can have confidence that your goals and budget match up well with the HVAC company's high quality work.

Special thanks to Chris Reynolds, an HVAC technician and licensed HVAC contractor with Advanced Energy, for his information. Chris has six NATE certifications, an HVAC license, and years of field experience.

Hannah McKenzie is a residential building science consultant for Advanced Energy in Raleigh.

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Mount Olive celebrates with 30th annual

N.C. Pickle Festival

By Leah Chester-Davis

Any town that celebrates pickles is worth a visit. Mount Olive, a town of about 4,500 people located in eastern North Carolina, plays host to the 30th Annual North Carolina Pickle Festival on Friday and Saturday, April 22–23.

The town uses its favorite food item as the impetus to get the community together. According to Lynn Williams, public relations manager for the Mt. Olive Pickle Company and a festival co-chair, "the festival is a mix of street fair, community festival and family reunion."

As part of that celebration, two days are packed with fun and festivities, including the Tour de Pickle, a 25-, 50- or 75-mile recreational bike ride, a Cuke Patch 5K, live entertainment, antique farm equipment display, juried art show, mascot races of nearby businesses and organizations (including Ollie Cucumber), food vendors, a pickle-packing production challenge, pickle-flavored food, a pickle derby, an old car show and lots more activities designed to draw people to the downtown.

N.C. Pickle Festival

A company and town grow from cukes

As the festival celebrates its 30th year, Mt. Olive Pickle Company, formed in 1926 and named for the town, celebrates its 90th year. In the 1920s, a bumper crop of cucumbers so prolific they were rotting in the fields prompted a Lebanese immigrant, Shickrey Baddour, to brine the cucumbers. The idea grew into a local business, with people getting together to form and grow a company that has since put the Mt. Olive name on store shelves nationwide.

According to Williams, there were 37 original shareholders who invested about $19,500 and produced about 6,000 cases the first year. The company now produces 14½ million cases each year, which amounts to about 140 to 145 million jars. The company employs more than 500 workers year-round and about 300 to 350 more during the peak summer season.

Mt. Olive is the largest independent pickle company in the United States and the second best-selling brand in the country, with all the manufacturing based in Mt. Olive. The company continues to buy cucumbers (about 56 million pounds) from North Carolina farmers and they have extended their sourcing to other states to support year-round production.

To show their community support, the company is a proud sponsor of the festival, with numerous employees participating. The company sponsors a pickle booth where it showcases a few of its products. "You can eat all the pickles you want," says Williams.

The company also sponsors a student art contest, which is on display at the festival. With its pickle theme, the company purchases some of the winning pieces to hang in its headquarters.

It seems fitting that this pickle town's annual festival now is one of the sites for a naturalization ceremony, considering the genesis of the pickle company was the idea of an immigrant. This year, 32 people will be sworn in as United States citizens during a ceremony at 9 a.m. Saturday morning, April 23.

Each year the festival adds new features, grows and changes. Williams gives credit to Julie Beck, who has been chair of the festival for 22 years. Beck, president of the Chamber of Commerce, clearly relishes her role in making the festival a fun community event.

A world traveler, Beck is always on the lookout for ideas to incorporate in the local festival. While she can spout off a long list of activities and features of the upcoming festival, she is proud of the festival's contribution in promoting agriculture in the region, making an economic impact and showcasing the town of Mount Olive. "It draws our community together," she said.

Leah Chester-Davis has her own business, Chester-Davis Communications (chester-davis.com), specializing in food, farm and lifestyle brands and organizations.

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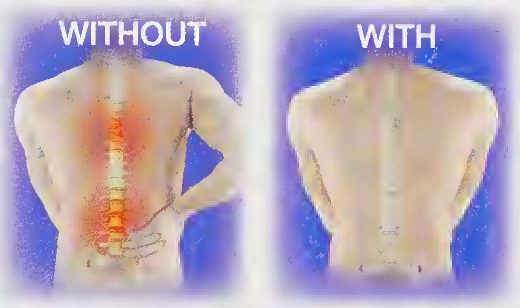

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Family road trips

Tips to make your vacations go smoothly

Hitting the road with the family? Experts say there's no reason to view the journey itself as a pre-vacation chore.

[illegible]dio – Fotolia.com

Family time in the car can be a great opportunity for bonding and making memories. Planning before you get on the road will go a long way toward keeping everyone relaxed and happy.

To keep road warriors comfortable and content, here are some tips:

- **Prepare your vehicle.** Check the wear and pressure on your tires, and be sure your fluids (oil, coolant and wiper fluid) are topped off.
- **Make it an adventure.** Just because you have an ultimate destination doesn't mean you can't enjoy fun stuff in between. Check your route for family-friendly stops along the way, such as a zoo, park or even a toy store to give kids something to look forward. It can also break the trip into manageable pieces.
- **Leave plenty of time to get where you are going.** Schedule your departure time to keep this in mind. When you plan, consult at least two online driving directions, such as google.com, mapquest.com and randmcnally.com for an idea of estimated times. Then plan for extra time for fun stops and unforeseen traffic congestion.
- **Involve teenagers in your plans.** Asking them beforehand what they'd like to see or do can go a long way to prevent them from shutting down. If they don't volunteer ideas, stay patient and show them possible places to stop on an online map.
- **Keep little ones engaged.** Technology features like built-in screens and DVD players can be saviors on the road. If your car doesn't come equipped with these, consider bringing along a handheld device on which little ones can play games or watch videos. And if technology isn't your thing, remember that magnetized board games and word games work just as well.
- **Bring snacks.** Greasy food isn't the best for staying alert or feeling good. Instead of relying on fast food, bring small, healthy snacks to keep kids (and adults) content. Great options include protein bars, cheese cubes and bread sticks, and fruits and vegetables that are easy to eat like carrot sticks, bananas and apples.
- **Encourage travel journals.** This can be in writing form or by taking photos of memorable stops to post online, or both. Bring stamps so your kids can mail postcards, too.
- **Have baby wipes and hand sanitizers on hand.** Even if your kids aren't in diapers anymore, wipes are great for wiping faces, car interiors and restaurant tables.

— *StatePoint*

Fuel-efficient cars

Thinking of buying or renting a car? Autotrader offers a list of 10 fuel-efficient family cars that boast affordability, roomy interiors and a fuel-efficient 30 miles per gallon on the highway. Their picks: Ford Fusion, Honda Accord, Honda CR-V, Jeep Cherokee, Hyundai Tucson, Kia Optima, Mazda CX-5, Nissan Rogue, Subaru Outback and the Toyota Camry. For research and reviews, visit autotrader.com.

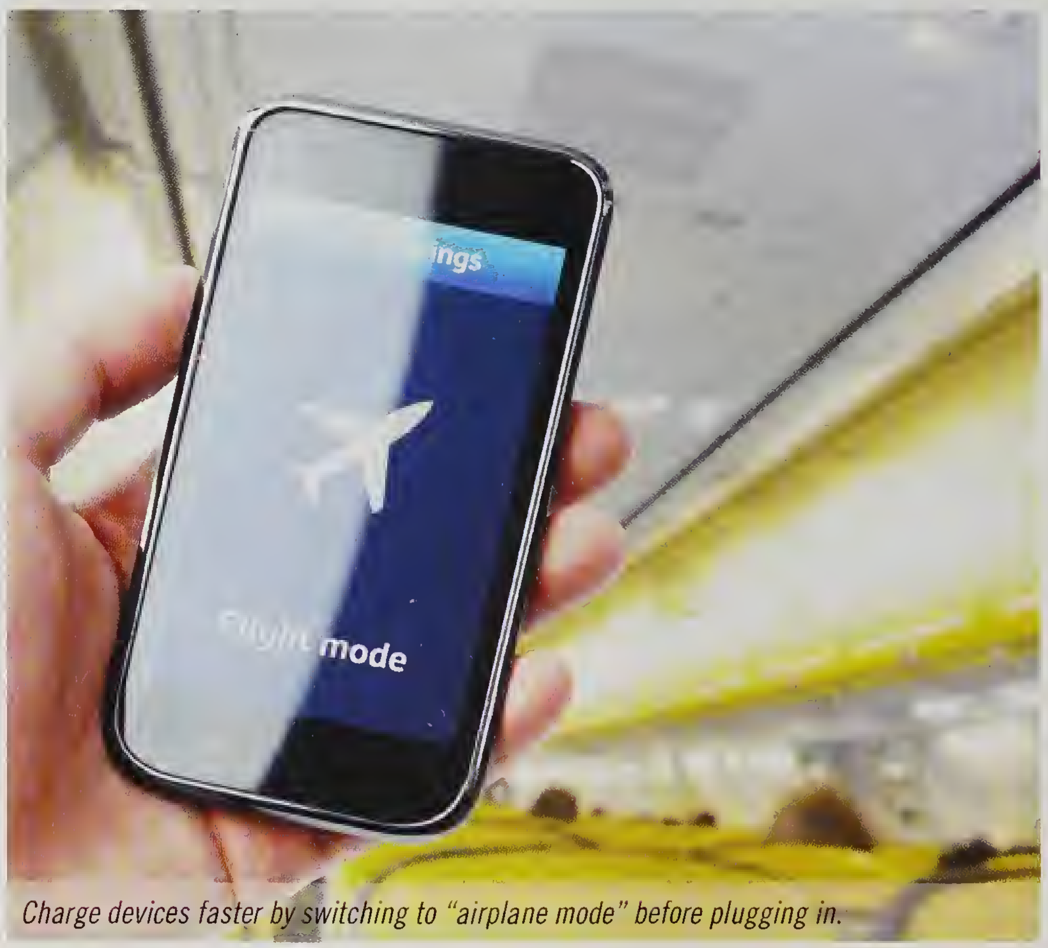
Smartphone savvy

Tricks for traveling smart with yours

Whether you're traveling solo, as a couple or with your entire extended family, there's one thing you likely won't forget to bring on your trip: your smartphone or tablet. Nearly two-thirds of Americans are now smartphone owners, according to the Pew Research Center, and almost half own a tablet. Right next to socks and a toothbrush, your mobile device is one of the most important and useful items you can bring with you.

These devices are meant to be mobile and while on the road, our mobile devices help us navigate new places, entertain us during long flights and keep us connected to back home. However, what might throw your trip into a tailspin is the amount of data these devices can consume. Streaming video, photo sharing, travel apps and Internet browsing can eat up data fast.

Trends show our need for data is growing exponentially. In fact, individual data usage will increase from almost 2 GB used per month in 2014 in North America to almost 11 GB in 2019, according to Cisco's Mobile Visual Networking Index. The last thing you want to come home to is a huge bill of data overages because you or your child used too much data. To get the most out of your smartphone and tablet without the headaches of low batteries and data charges, consider these tips:



Charge devices faster by switching to "airplane mode" before plugging in.

Connect to Wi-Fi whenever possible

One simple proactive step can dramatically decrease your data usage: connect to Wi-Fi. While not always possible, Wi-Fi is widely available at airports, train stations, restaurants and many other public places. If you're dealing with a delay, connect to the local Wi-Fi network and you can check email, surf the web or shop online to your heart's content.

Download playlists and movies

Taking a long plane trip or heading out on an epic road trip? Traveling to another country? Download playlists and movies before you leave so your content is ready to go when you're not able to be connected to a network.

Stream smart

Streaming video and music can use a ton of data so be careful what you choose to watch. Also consider what your provider offers. For example, the program "Binge On" lets customers watch video streaming from top select partners like Netflix, HBO and ESPN without using their high-speed data bucket. Learn more at T-Mobile.com.

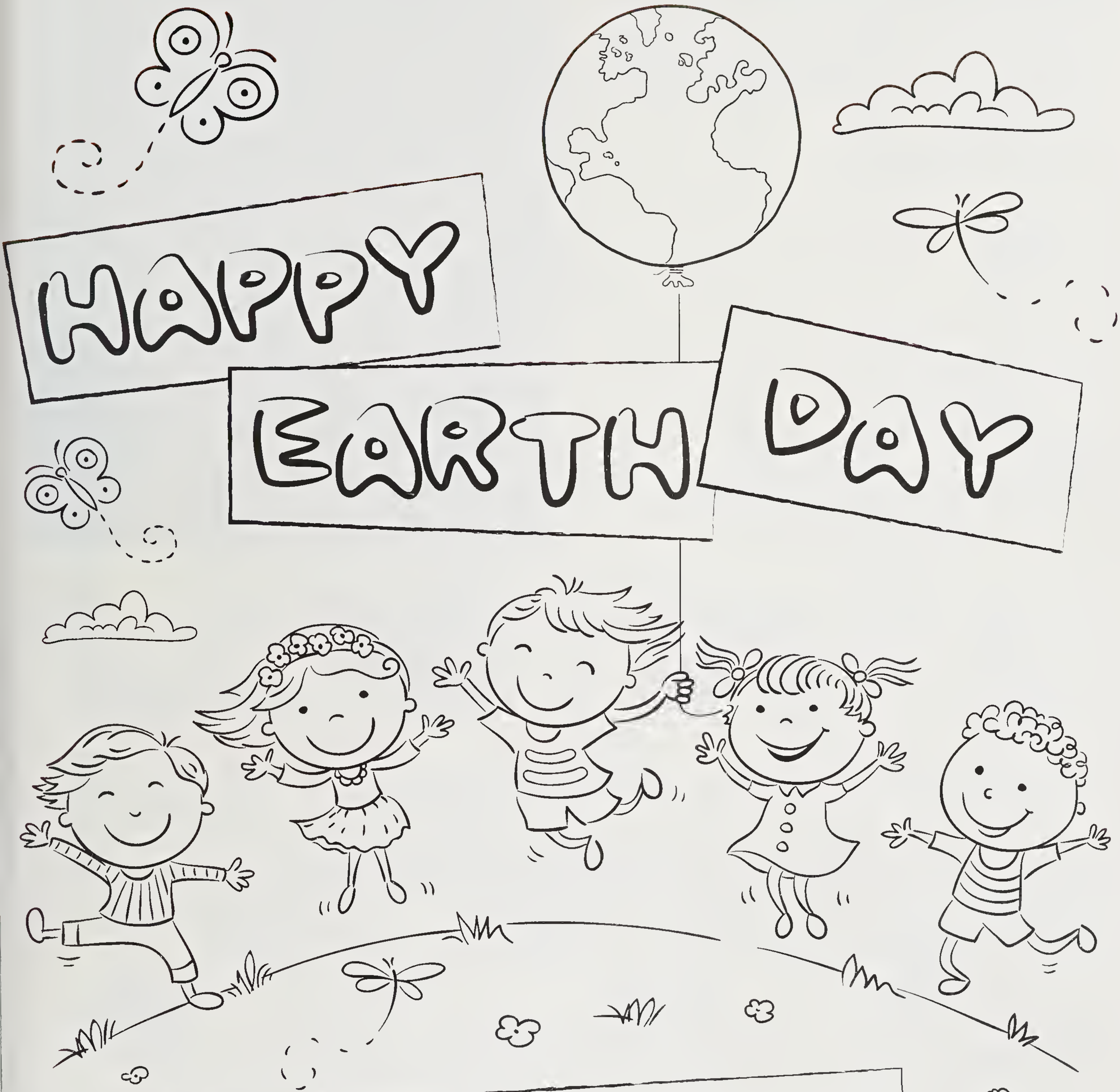
Ready devices for travel abroad

It's important to know your plan and ready your devices for traveling to other countries. Call your carrier to make sure you're covered and avoid outrageous international roaming fees.

Stay charged

Nothing is worse than running out of battery while traveling. If you plan to be away from a charging port, an extra battery or portable charger can be a lifesaver. Only have a few minutes to charge before takeoff? Charge devices faster by switching to "airplane mode" before plugging in.

— Brandpoint



TIP: Earth Day is April 22! Give back to the environment by planting a tree to help shade your house on hot summer days. Ask mom or dad to help you pick the perfect spot and plant the tree.

AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

Energy Explorers

Exploring North Carolina's backyard

Stay-cationing on a shoestring

By Allison Goldberg

Let's face it. Not everyone can afford wine tasting in Europe or a cruise to Greek islands. In fact, not everyone can afford a trip to other states. Luckily, opportunities exist for singles, couples or family to travel on less luxurious budgets in their own home state.

Day trips

Many people don't know much about their neighboring towns and cities. Are there North Carolina museums, restaurants, shops and nature areas you've always wanted to explore? Do it! You can stay for free in your own home and support a local economy.

You are more apt to make it a real vacation if you specifically set aside a date for your special day and research beforehand. Figure out how much driving you can comfortably do in a day in choosing an area. For some, it's about four hours total round trip, others it's less or more.

Consult the area's visitors bureau or Chamber of Commerce and the local paper's events guide. Or search for restaurant deals and activities at places like Groupon.com. And museums often offer a free day for visitors or discounts on select days.

Consider taking the train

Climb aboard instead of driving and you'll have a unique experience enjoying scenery you haven't seen before. Amtrak offers two routes through N.C. The Piedmont travels between Charlotte and Raleigh, stopping in Cary, Durham, Burlington, Greensboro, High Point, Salisbury and Kannapolis. The Carolinian covers the same route, with service extending up the East Coast to New York City. Its stops include Wilson and Rocky Mount before heading north. Most stations are close to attractions and eateries.

You can take your bike, too, if you reserve it. This check-in service is available free of charge on some trains between Charlotte and Raleigh. A bicycle fee of $20 applies if you're traveling to and from select stations between Raleigh and New York. Call 800-872-7245 or visit amtrak.com to learn more.

Tent camping

It's fun to stay in your own backyard, literally, as a family. You can toast marshmallows and curl up in cozy sleeping bags but you won't have to pack so much and can still enjoy comforts like using your own bathroom. Or perhaps you want to stay overnight at a destination? Either way, camping is a great way to control costs and you can rent or borrow gear.

See travel stories in this issue about North Carolina's State Parks and National Parks in North Carolina for location ideas. There's also a website, campingcarolinas.com, with a directory of RV Parks and camping sites in North Carolina and South Carolina, categorized by the mountains, piedmont, and coast. For campers who desire more amenities, it also lists camping cabins and luxury cabins.

Camper rentals

Tent camping just not your thing? Consider renting a camper to take to the beach, a lake or elsewhere. Life by the Horns in Apex is among businesses that rent lightweight campers that can be towed by mini-vans and small SUVs. You'll have the comforts of a fridge, stove, air conditioning and heat. Visit lifhornscamping.com to learn more.

Spend cash

Set a budget for necessities like food and a separate budget for extras like souvenirs. Once on your trip, try to spend only cash. It will help you realize how much you spend—without causing you to spend the next year paying off your credit card.

Allison Goldberg writes for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives. Carolina County contributing editor Karen Olson House also provided information for this story.

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10 FT. x 20 FT. PORTABLE CAR CANOPY
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• Weighs 73 lbs.
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20"
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LOT 61894/60725 69465 shown
$24.99
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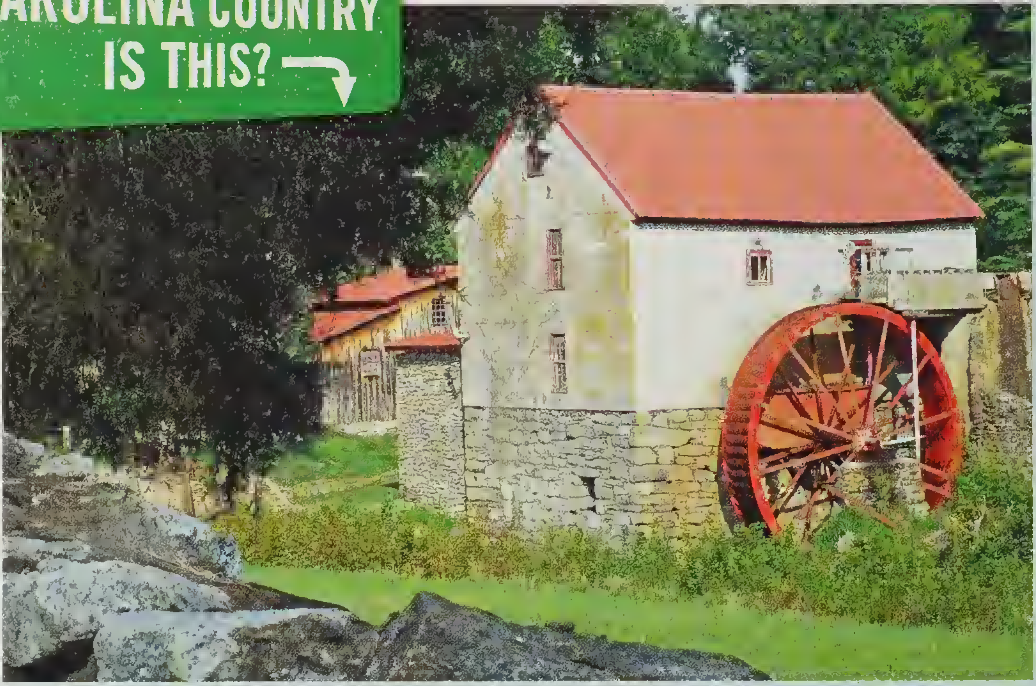


This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by April 6 with your name, address and the name of your electric cooperative.

Online: carolinacountry.com

By email: where@carolinacountry.com

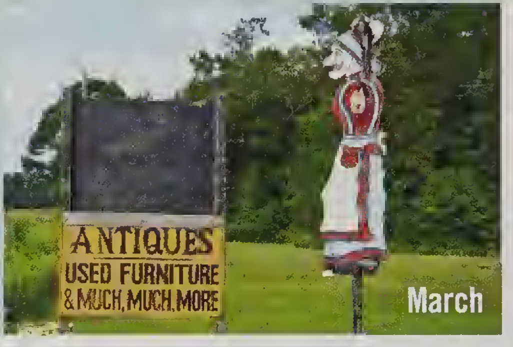
Or by mail:
Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

Multiple entries from the same person will be disqualified.

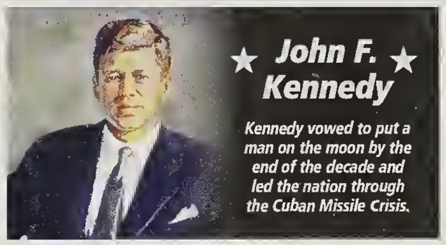
The winner, chosen at random and announced in our May issue, will receive $25. To see the answer before you get your April magazine, go to "Where Is This?" on our website carolinacountry.com.

March

Many readers recognized the March magazine scene, a picture taken by Renee Gannon along Old Highway 17 Business (or Ocean Highway as readers call it) outside of Bolivia, Brunswick County. We received just one wrong answer out of the 55 submitted. Many readers remember the old store, "Granny's Antiques." Several of you mentioned the sign had arms that rotated with the wind. Catherine Cook and Annette Smith miss browsing through the building looking for treasure. The store is closed, but owner Judson Ward left the sign up in honor and memory of his wife, Geraldine ("Gerry"), as a tribute to her humorous and outgoing personality, said Sandra Johnson. The winning entry chosen at random from all correct submissions came from Mary Phillips of Bolivia, a member of Brunswick EMC.



March



★ John F. Kennedy ★

Kennedy vowed to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade and led the nation through the Cuban Missile Crisis.

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April Events

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April 1–2, Dobson

Mountains

Spring Homeschool Day
April 13, Chimney Rock
800-277-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

Naturalist Niche: Wildflowers
April 16, Chimney Rock
800-277-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

Greening Up The Mountains Festival
April 23, Sylva
828-586-2719
mainstreetsylva.org

NC State Parks: Earth Day
April 23, Chimney Rock
800-277-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

Stonewall Challenge Golf Tournament
April 27, Cashiers
828-586-2155
mountainlovers.com

Annual Metric
Cycling through Yancey, Mitchell counties
April 30, Burnsville
828-682-7209
burnsvillemetric.com

Shining Rock Riverfest
April 30, Canton
828-648-2363
shiningrockriverfest.com

ONGOING

Storybook Characters Exhibit
Figures created by doll artists
April 1–30, Asheville
828-250-4721
karena@charter.net

Woody's Original Mountain Music
Friday nights April 1–29, Marion
828-290-2377

Mountain Gateway Music Jam
April 3–24, Old Fort
828-290-2377
mountaingatewaymuseum.org

ArtMix: Art Exhibit
Through May 28, Lenoir
828-754-2486
caldwellarts.com

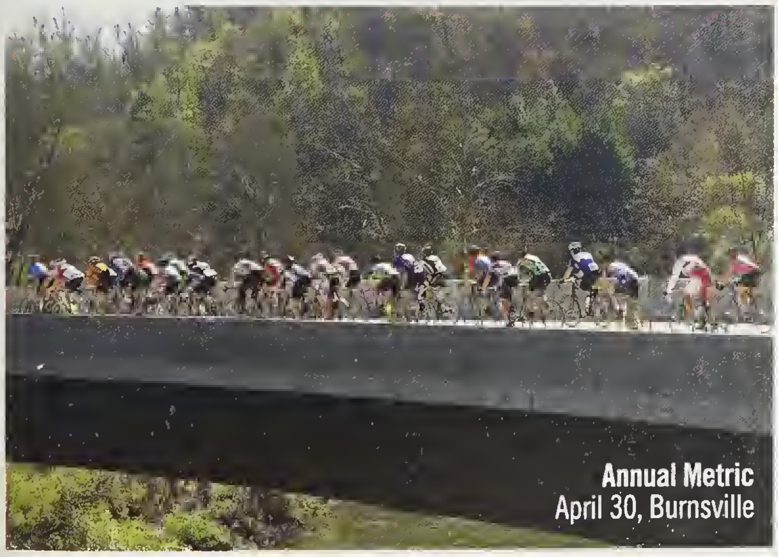
Piedmont

Taken
Free movie
April 1, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

Old Time Fiddlers Convention
April 1–2, Dobson
877-999-8390
surryoldtime.com

Grinding Seed Corn Of The Nation
NC Junior Reserves in the Civil War
April 1–3, Burlington
336-227-4785
nchistoricsites.org

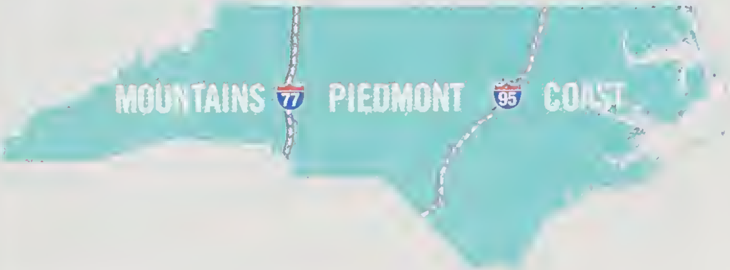
Blast From The Past Festival
April 2, Spring Lake
910-436-4681
ncparks.gov/carvers-creek-state-park



Annual Metric
April 30, Burnsville

Carolina Compass Policy

- We list events in the magazine as space allows and may edit as needed. We list more events on carolinacountry.com in the Carolina Adventures section.
- All submissions must be made on carolinacountry.com in Carolina Adventures/Submit an Event. Deadlines are posted there, too. *(No email or U.S. Mail.)*
- Public venue events only. *(No business-hosted events.)*
- Limit 3 events per venue per month in the magazine. More posted online.
- For accuracy, ongoing events must be submitted monthly.
- Public contact required: website, email or phone number.



Listing Deadlines:
For June: April 25
For July: May 25

Submit Listings Online:
Visit carolinacountry.com and click "Carolina Adventures" to add your event to the magazine and/or our website.

SPONSORED BY

Big Lick Bluegrass Festival
April 7–9, Oakboro

Spring Fling Show
April 2, Fayetteville
910-433-1457
fcpr.us

Danville Symphony Orchestra
April 2, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

All American Marathon/ 5K/Half Marathon
April 3, Fayetteville
910-907-3616
allamericanmarathon.com

Cape Fear New Musical Festival
April 7, Fayetteville
910-630-7100
capefearnewmusic.com

American Girl Fashion Show
April 9–10, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com/events

Herbs & Medicine
Backcountry Explorers program
April 7 & 9, Charlotte
704-568-1774
charlottemuseum.org

Big Lick Bluegrass Festival
April 7–9, Oakboro
704-985-6987
biglickbluegrass.com

Classic Antique Power Farm Heritage Days
April 8–9, Benson
919-291-5648
classicantiquepowerinc.com

There are more than 200 farmers markets in North Carolina.
For one near you, visit **ncfarmfresh.com/farmmarkets.asp**

Holistic Health & Wellness Expo
April 9, Fayetteville
910-964-6489
holistichealthandwellnessexponc.com

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans
Artifact display, USO show
April 9, Waxhaw
704-843-1832
themuseumofthewaxhaws.org

Spring Fling
April 9, Spring Lake
910-436-0011
spring-lake.org

Joel Road 5-Mile Yard Sale
April 9, Carthage
910-638-9006

Lecrae Higher Learning Tour
Hip-hop artist performs
April 10, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com/events

Glen Davis Memorial Concert
April 12, Asheboro
336-241-2497
larrygdavismusic.com

Clifford The Big Red Dog Live!
April 12, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com/events

Back Porch Stories
April 15, Wadesboro
704-694-5211
carolinaswritersconference.org

Military Vehicle & Collectors Show
April 15–16, Denton
336-859-2755

Carmina Burana
Symphony Orchestra
& Oratorio Singers
April 16, Fayetteville
910-433-4690
fayettevillesymphony.org

Tanglewood Master Gardener Plant Sale
April 16–17, Clemmons
336-703-2850

Quilt Days
April 16–17, Warrenton
252-257-3800
warrentonquiltdays.com

Celebration Of Spring
April 16–17, Seagrove
336-517-7272
discoverseagrove.com

Fourth Friday: Earth Day
April 22, Fayetteville
910-323-1776
theartscouncil.com

Dogwood Festival
April 22–24, Fayetteville
910-323-1934
faydogwoodfestival.com

Bye Bye Birdie
Roxboro Little Theater
April 22–24, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

An Afternoon At Retreat
Butter churning, spinning and games
April 23, Sanford
910-947-2051
horseshoe@ncdcr.gov

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO
In case something changes after Carolina Country goes to press, check information from the contact listed.

A Season For Tea
April 23, Wadesboro
704-695-2275

Spring Sing
Lexington Choral Society
Apr. 24, Lexington
336-956-8814
lexingtonchoralsociety.org

Antiques Festival
April 29–30, Liberty
336-622-3041
libertyantiquesfestival.com

Civil War Symposium
April 30, Charlotte
704-568-1774
charlottemuseum.org

World Of Outlaws Craftsman
Late Model Series
April 30, Fayetteville
910-624-0579
www.fayettevillemotorspeedway.com

ONGOING

Guided History Tours
Through Dec. 31, Charlotte
704-568-1774
charlottemuseum.org

PCC Student Art & Paintings
By Debra Wuliger
April 1–30, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

Arsenic & Old Lace
Dark comedy
April 7–24, Fayetteville
910-323-4234
cfrt.org

Dobson Cruise In
April 9 through Sept. 10, Dobson
336-648-2309

Heritage Festival & Wild Turkey 5K Trail Run/Walk
April 9–10, Monroe
704-282-3822
mastergardenersunioncountync.org

Fort Bragg Fair
April 28 through May 15, Fort Bragg
910-396-9126
bragg.armymwr.com/us/bragg

Coast

First Friday ArtWalk
April 1, Elizabeth City
252-338-6455
artsaoa.com

Mark Twain: Day & Night
April 2, Oriental
252-249-0477
oldtheater.org

Pirate Fest
April 8–9, Greenville
252-561-8400
uptowngreenville.com

Publick Day
April 16, Beaufort

Paddle For The Border
April 30, South Mills

In-water Boat Show
Nautical vendors, wooden boat expo
April 8–10, Oriental
252-249-0228
orientalboatshow.com

Pig In The Park
Live music, vendors
April 9, Goldsboro
919-735-2358
piginthepark.com

Brunswick Concert Band
Spring Concert
April 10, 12 & 17, Bolivia
910-253-1643
brunswickbands.org

Susan Werner
April 14–15,
252-617-2125
pamlicomusic.org

A Taste Of Duplin
April 15, Kenansville
910-296-2181
tasteofduplin.com

Tour Of Historic Homes
April 16, Oriental
252-249-3340

Publick Day
Open air market
April 16, Beaufort
252-728-5225
beauforthistoricsite.org

Lighthouse Run
April 16, Caswell Beach
910-457-6964
oakislandlighthouserun.com

Historic Landmarks Open House
April 22, Kill Devil Hills
252-449-5318
kdhnc.com

Pickle Festival
April 22–23, Mount Olive
919-738-0211
ncpicklefest.org

Days At The Docks Festival
April 23–24, Holden Beach
910-754-6644
greaterholdenbeachmerchants.com

Strawberry & Wine Festival
April 24, Ocean Isle Beach
910-579-9021
oldbridgepreservationsociety.org

Paddle For The Border
April 30, South Mills
252-771-8333
dismalsswampwelcomecenter.com

All About Kidz
April 30, Belville
910-383-0553
nbchamberofcommerce.com

Walk To Defeat ALS
April 30, Greenville
877-568-4347
alsnc.org

ONGOING

N.C. Azalea Festival
Rockfest, street fair, boxing
April 6–10, Wilmington
(910) 794–4650
ncazaleafestival.org

Little Art Exhibit
Mini-canvases
Apr. 26–May. 19, Washington
252-946-2504
artsofthepamlico.org

CAROLINA COUNTRY adventures

A studio stroll through Asheville's River Arts District

By Hazel Freeman

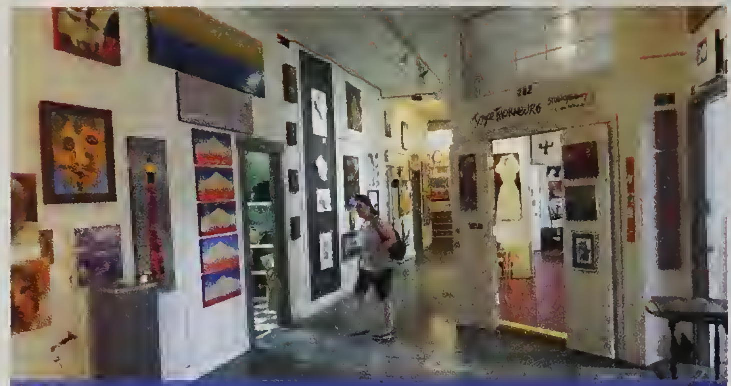
Spring is a great time to stroll the streets and artist studios of the mile-long West Asheville River Arts District (RAD). Located about a mile from downtown, you can visit almost 200 artists studios any time of the year, but the RAD really comes alive during the bi-annual Studio Stroll weekends in May and November. You'll find not just amazing art studios and galleries, but antiques, culinary delights in the many fine cafés and restaurants, and vibrant music venues.

Situated in amongst some 25 refurbished historic, industrial buildings nestled along the French Broad River, the RAD offers more than just galleries. The working studios along the RAD give visitors the opportunity to meet, observe and interact with the artists at work, ask questions and be immersed in the creative process as it happens. Visitors also have access to hands-on activities throughout the weekends, including trying glass blowing or spinning a bowl on a potter's wheel.

Asheville's industrial district along the French Broad River once housed warehouses, and businesses such as a livestock slaughterhouse for Armour Packing Co, cotton, textile and flour mills, a chicken hatchery, icehouse and a tannery, to name a few. Around 1985 the buildings began being repurposed as working artist studios.

"It wasn't that long ago that this was an industrial area with the railroads coming right through the center of it," says Fleta Monaghan, artist and owner of 310 ART. The Norfolk Southern railroad still operates through the heart of the RAD. Monaghan opened her working studio gallery in 2006 in the Riverview Station, built c. 1900, which once housed a local tannery.

Monaghan's studio is filled with original contemporary fine art and features the work of 24 local, talented artists. The studio holds paintings, sculpture, mixed media, Giclee ("zhee-klay" fine art digital prints), jewelry, encaustic and photography. 310 ART also offers one of the oldest and most comprehensive adult classes in fine arts. You can even take a class in Painting with Beer, from prominent watercolor artist Nadine Charlsen.



Joyce Thornburg Studio

Village Potters

Helping to put the RAD on the map is the newly opened 5,000-square-foot Riverview Station studio/gallery of nationally known abstract artist Jonas Gerard. Gerard is known for his large, vibrant, colorful paintings that grace the walls of hospitals, corporate buildings, hotels and individual art collections.

Asheville is becoming well known for its many excellent craft breweries. The RAD will also be home to the soon-to-be-open New Belgium east coast brewery. New Belgium is an employee-owned craft brewery, crafting Belgian-inspired brews. This new, $140 million brewery complex is located at the site of the old Asheville stockyard. New Belgium joins two other national craft breweries in the area, Sierra Nevada, and Oskar Blues.

Almost any artist's medium can be found being created in the RAD. Exquisite sculptural art baskets are crafted by basket maker Matt Tommey, who uses local, sustainably gathered barks, vines and branches to craft his one-of-a-kind sculptural baskets. At the Village Potters, six renowned potters form clay into durable, functional and beautiful works of art. The Village Potters also has a teaching center and is expanding to include an Independent Study & Mentoring program.

The Studio Stroll is free and self-guided. This spring's Studio Stroll Weekend is May 14–15. The RAD is open all year and the best days to meet artists is Thursday through Saturday. For more info, including a studio guide with map, on Asheville's River Arts District, visit riverartsdistrict.com.

Hazel Freeman lives in Woodsfield, Ohio, where she is a regular contributor to the Ohio Electric Cooperative's magazine, Country Living. To learn more, visit hazelfreeman.com.

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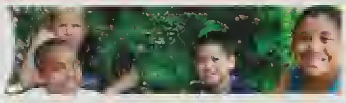
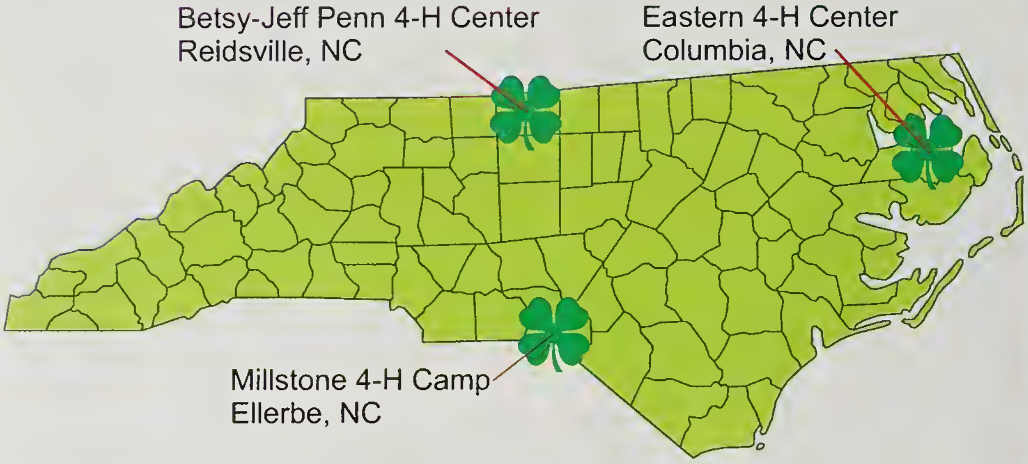
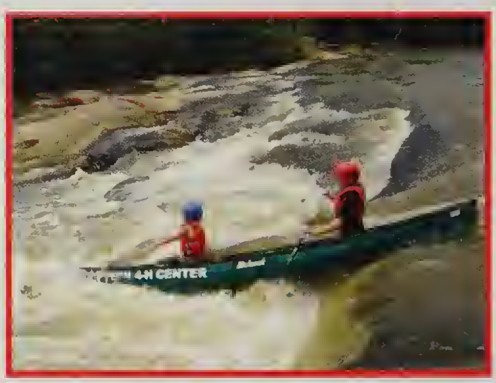
CAMP ACCREDITED



4-H Summer Camps


Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H Center
Reidsville, NC
Eastern 4-H Center
Columbia, NC
Millstone 4-H Camp
Ellerbe, NC



Facilities & Programs

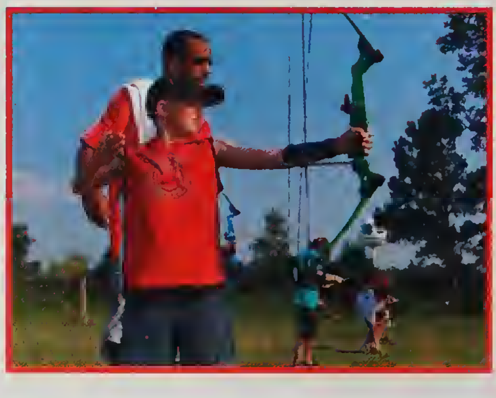
Each 4-H camp and conference center is uniquely different, based on its geographic location. All camps and conference centers offer similar activities, facilities, and programs, including:

- Archery
- Cabins
- Trails
- Campfire Circles
- Environmental Education Programs & Activities
- Teambuilding & Challenge Courses
- Swimming
- Canoeing
- Arts & Crafts
- Classrooms
- Dining Facilities
- Meeting Facilities
- Rec Halls
- Outdoor Education Programs
- Outdoor Living Skills
- Shooting Sports

How do Campers Register for Camp?

Fact - Youth do **NOT** have to be a 4-H club member to attend camp. To enroll, contact your county 4-H Agent at the Cooperative Extension Service office.

Register Online at www.nc4hcamps.org



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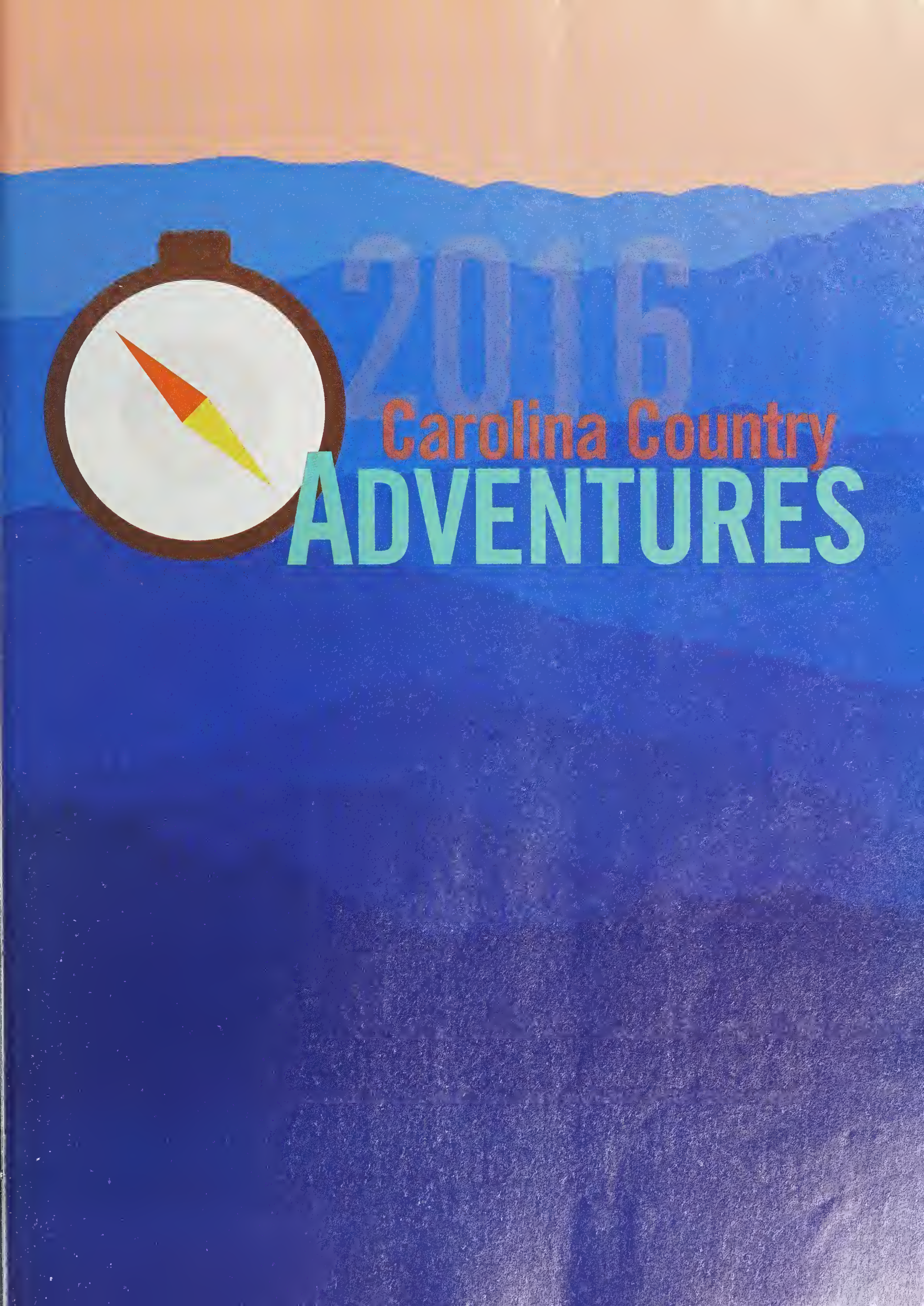
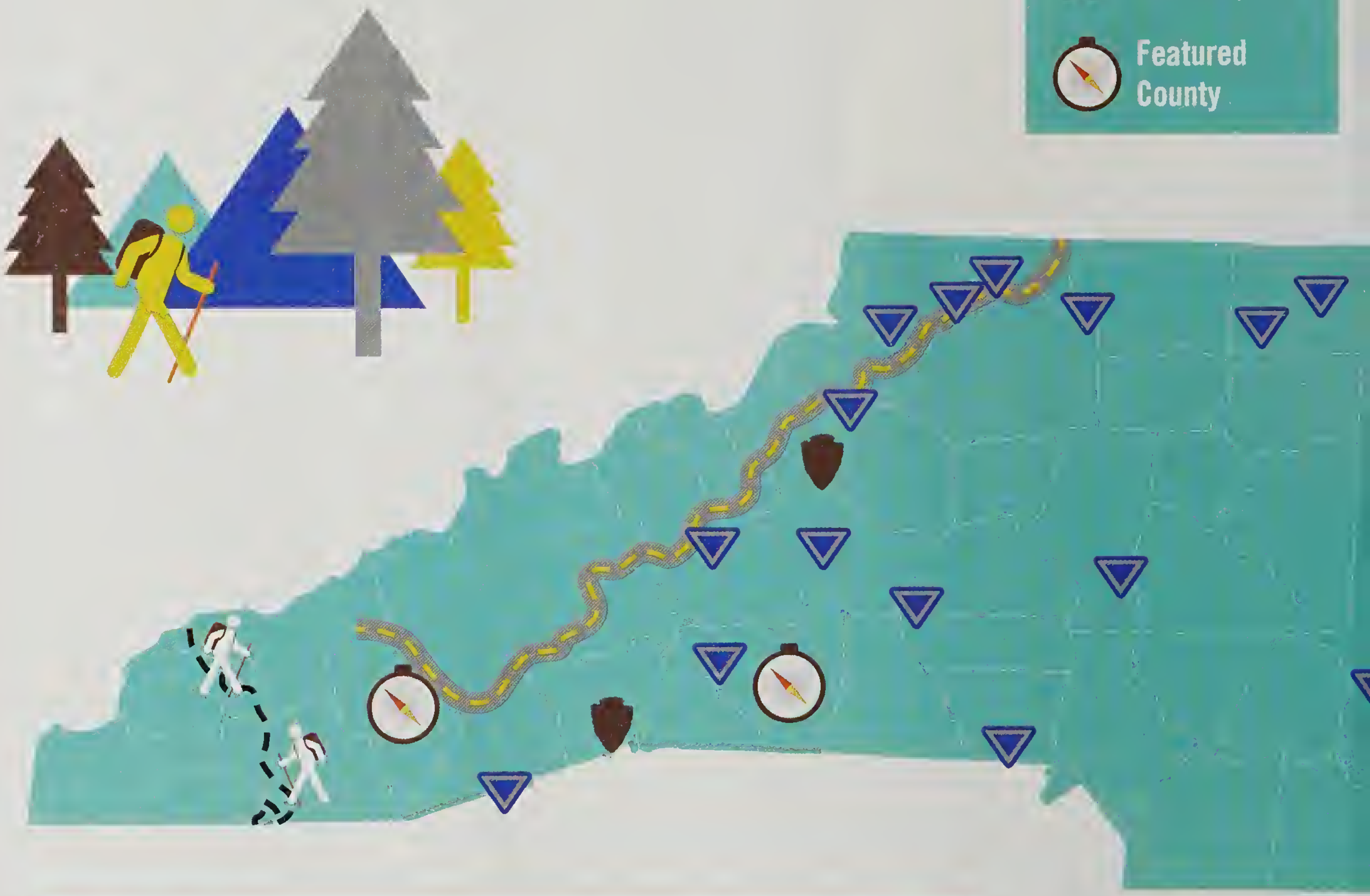


2016
Carolina Country
ADVENTURES

2016 Carolina Country ADVENTURES

- ▼ State Parks
- National Parks
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Lighthouses
- Appalachain Trail
- Featured County



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Jackson County: Exhilaration and relaxation await 60

Accessible attractions 62

North Carolina's cultural and natural landscape is as diverse as its people. Our annual Touchstone Energy Travel Guide encourages you to experience the diversity from the mountains to the coast.

This year, we offer you six guides to Carolina Country Adventures. The Outer Banks lighthouses beckon visitors as they once did sailors; America's National Parks celebrate 100 years right alongside North Carolina State Parks centennial celebration; discover the hidden treasures of Rutherford County amongst the well-known Chimney Rock and Lake Lure; small town charm, waterfalls and beautiful vistas await you in Jackson County; and destinations offer accessibility to travelers with disabilities.

As you make your way through this guide and through the countryside, you can be assured that a Touchstone Energy cooperative is nearby.

Thanks to everyone who helped us compile this guide, and to our sponsors: the cooperatives and the advertisers on pages 48 to 52.

This supplement to Carolina Country is brought to you by North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives, serving nearly 2 million people in 93 North Carolina counties. We bring the power of human connections to all regions of North Carolina. Touchstone Energy cooperatives nationwide are committed to integrity, accountability, innovation and community involvement. Send comments and corrections to editor@carolinacountry.com.

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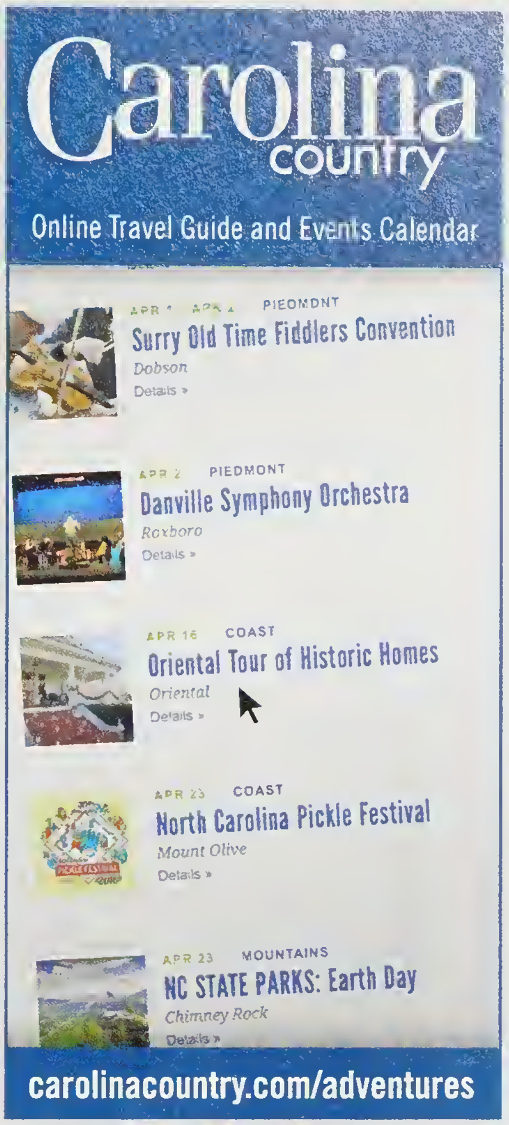

Carolina country
Online Travel Guide and Events Calendar

APR 1 – APR 2 PIEDMONT
Surry Old Time Fiddlers Convention
Dobson
Details »

APR 2 PIEDMONT
Danville Symphony Orchestra
Roxboro
Details »

APR 16 COAST
Oriental Tour of Historic Homes
Oriental
Details »

APR 23 COAST
North Carolina Pickle Festival
Mount Olive
Details »

APR 23 MOUNTAINS
NC STATE PARKS: Earth Day
Chimney Rock
Details »

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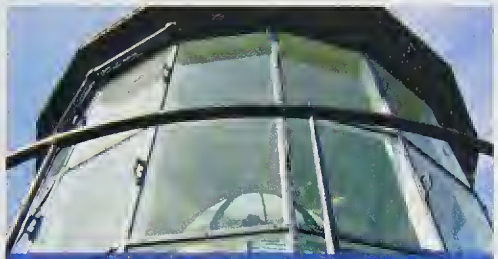
Outer Banks lighthouses

Historic landmarks continue to shine

By Amy Ney

If you enjoy lighthouses, you'll love these jewels along the North Carolina Outer Banks. Lighthouses were originally built to warn sailors of dangerous coastline, but today they also serve as national landmarks and tourist destinations. Each has a distinctive color pattern recognizable in daylight and a flash cycle distinguishable for miles at night, all noted on nautical charts to aid in navigation.


Currituck Beach Lighthouse

Starting from the north in Corolla, you'll find the unpainted *Currituck Beach Lighthouse,* which stands 162 feet tall with walls over five feet thick at the base. Its light fills in the gap of darkness between Bodie Island Light to the south and Cape Henry to the north. For a small fee, you can climb the 220 steps to the top to view Whalehead (the restored 1920s home of Edward Collins Knight, Jr.) and the Atlantic Ocean. The light keeper's house nearby holds a gift shop filled with souvenirs. 252-453-6778 or currituckbeachlight.com

Further south, ***Bodie Island Lighthouse*** (pronounced "body") offers a self-guided climb of the brick structure built in 1872. The lighthouse, in its third location, opened in 2013 after a major renovation. At the top, you have a clear view of Oregon Inlet, which joins the Pamlico Sound with the Atlantic Ocean. Bodie Island Lighthouse boasts horizontal black and white stripes and a restored first order Fresnel lens (largest of the seven sizes). 252-441-5711 or nps.gov/caha/planyour visit/lighthouseclimbs.htm

Driving south along the 70-mile stretch of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, you arrive on Hatteras Island. *Cape Hatteras Lighthouse* was built in 1870 to warn about the rocky shoals nicknamed Graveyard of the Atlantic. The tallest brick lighthouse in America, it's recognizable by its iconic diagonal black and white stripes. It was moved almost 3,000 feet inland in 1999. In addition to climbing 257 steps to the lighthouse balcony, you can tour several historical structures and visit the gift shop. 252-473-2111 or nps.gov/caha/planyourvisit/lighthouseclimbs.htm

Near the southern end of Hatteras Island is ferry service to Ocracoke Island. After the 45-minute trip, you may drive the length of the island to arrive at the village of Ocracoke. Built in 1823, the 75-foot-tall whitewashed *Ocracoke Lighthouse* is the oldest operating light station in North Carolina. It boasts a fourth order Fresnel lens and is now fully automated. It's not open for climbing, but is one of the highlights of a three-mile walking tour that includes a small British Cemetery (which holds the graves of four sailors who washed ashore from the H.M.S. Bedfordshire torpedoed by a German U-boat in 1942) as well as other historical buildings. 252-473-2111 or nps.gov/caha/planyourvisit/ols.htm. **Free ferry service:** 252-986-2353 or ncdot.gov/ferry. **Free village tour:** 252-928-4531 or ocracokeisland.com/walking_tour.htm

These venerable lighthouses are close enough together to visit in succession, and are surrounded by a wealth of other enjoyable sites. Those include Jockey's Ridge State Park and the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills. There's also Fort Raleigh National Historic Site on Roanoke Island, with the Elizabethan Gardens and "Lost Colony" production nearby. For more information on these sites, see pages 54–55. Many sites are open seasonally, so check before you go.

Amy Ney is a freelance writer with a background in private land management. She lives in Haywood County and is a member of Haywood EMC.

Ocracoke Lighthouse

Bodie Island Lighthouse

Cape Hatteras Lighthouse

Area lodging

A variety of accommodations is available, including camping in National Park Service Campgrounds on Bodie Island, Hatteras Island and Ocracoke Island. nps.gov/caha/planyourvisit/campgrounds.htm

Reservations

1-877-444-6777 or recreation.gov

U.S. National Parks turn 100

Adventure awaits at sites in Tar Heel State

By Leah Chester-Davis

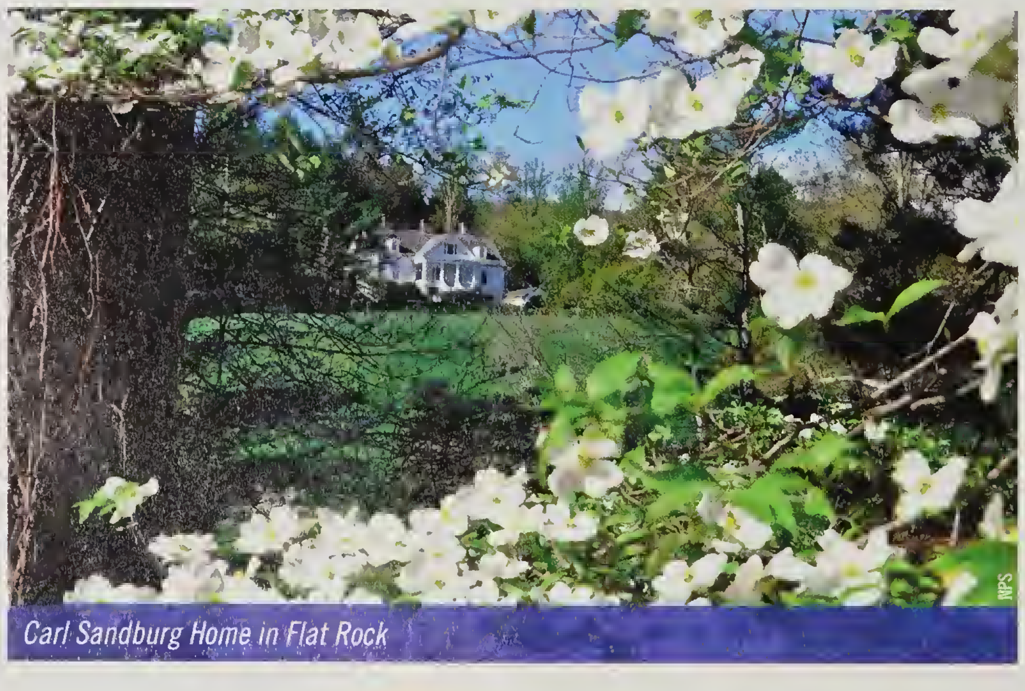
The National Park Service turns 100 this year, and every state has something to celebrate. North Carolina is home to numerous sites—parks, trails, scenic drives, seashores, landmarks—and each are worthy of a visit.

Adventure awaits, whether you're a history buff, a lover of science and nature, or one who simply is inspired and restored by being in the great outdoors. Our national parks have a lot to offer all ages.

Created by Congress on Aug. 25, 1916, there are more than 400 sites nationwide. Considered America's backyard, our national parks are a gift to everyone. Writer Wallace Stegner called them "the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst."

In addition to being great family places, national parks play a role in environmental stewardship, such as protecting ecosystems and reducing our carbon footprint. They also engage communities by helping preserve more than 27,000 treasured places that are reminders of our nation's past. In North Carolina that includes magnificent lighthouses.

Along with the tangible structures are numerous stories that shed light on important aspects of our country's life. Stories of courage, heroism and inspiration are shared across the country. Stories range from the Tuskegee Airmen at the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site in Alabama to conservationist John Muir's role in the Yosemite National Park, often referred to as the crown jewel of the park system. Another well-loved park is Yellowstone, the nation's first, established in 1872.



Carl Sandburg Home in Flat Rock

NPS

What better ways to learn a bit of history, experience nature, breathe fresh air and even learn camping or hiking skills than to visit one of our national parks? The National Park Service website (nps.gov) is a recommended first stop in planning your adventure. The National Park Foundation (nationalparks.org) also provides helpful information and free national park owner's guides that you can download.

Many parks are free but some sites charge an admission fee. In honor of the centennial, there are several free admission days: April 16–24, National Park Week; August 25–28, National Park Service Birthday Weekend; September 24, National Public Lands Day; and November 11, Veteran's Day. For families with 4th graders, a free "Every Kid in a Park" pass is available at everykidinapark.gov. The pass is good through August 31, 2016.

National Park Service sites in N.C.

Mountains

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail stretches 2,185 miles through 14 states, including North Carolina. This public footpath traverses through forests, wild lands, farm pastures and small towns. Trek a small portion of the trail or the complete stretch. There is no charge to access the trail, though portions of the trail fall within

Sculpture at Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills

other National Park Service or State Park sites, which may charge a fee and require a permit to park or to stay overnight in shelters and campsites. 304-535-6278 or nps.gov/appa.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is one of the loveliest scenic drives in the country. Meandering through North Carolina and Virginia, the scenery along the 469-mile road changes with the seasons, each offering delight in its exquisite natural beauty. Adventurers will find trailheads, photo opportunities and flora and fauna at every turn. 828-348-3400 or nps.gov/blri.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park straddles North Carolina and Tennessee, and is America's most visited park. Its amazing diversity of plants and animals is a draw for both scientists and the everyday adventurer. Among the oldest mountain ranges in the world, its elevations range from 850 to 6,643 feet. Enjoy camping, fishing, picnicking, bicycling, hiking, waterfall watching and scenic drives. 865-436-1200 or nps.gov/grsm.

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in Flat Rock gives a glimpse of the popular poet and Lincoln biographer's home, known as Connemara. Sandburg and his wife lived there the last 22 years of his life. The house and park are located on 264 acres and has hiking trails, a farm and dairy goats. 828-693-4178 or nps.gov/carl.

Coast

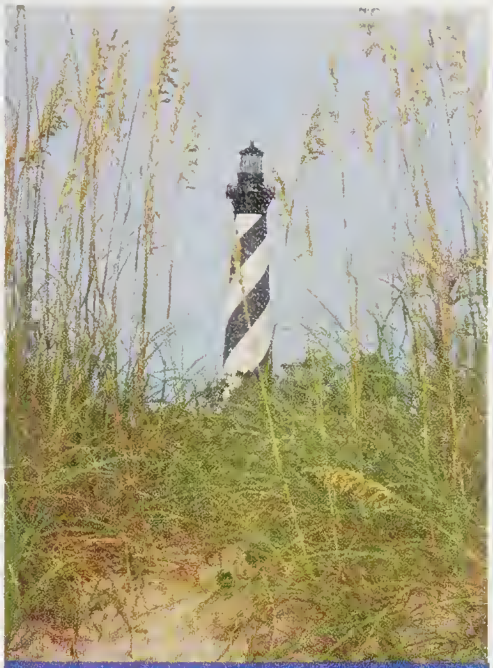
Cape Hatteras National Seashore, established in 1953, is the first U.S National Seashore. Pristine beaches, windswept dunes and marshland extend 70 miles of the Outer Banks from Bodie Island through Ocracoke Island. The area includes Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, three lighthouses (Bodie Island, Cape Hatteras, and Ocracoke), campgrounds and historic Coast Guard and U.S. Weather Bureau stations. The park's fishing and surfing are considered the best on the East Coast. Three visitor centers provide helpful information. 252-473-2111 or nps.gov/caha.

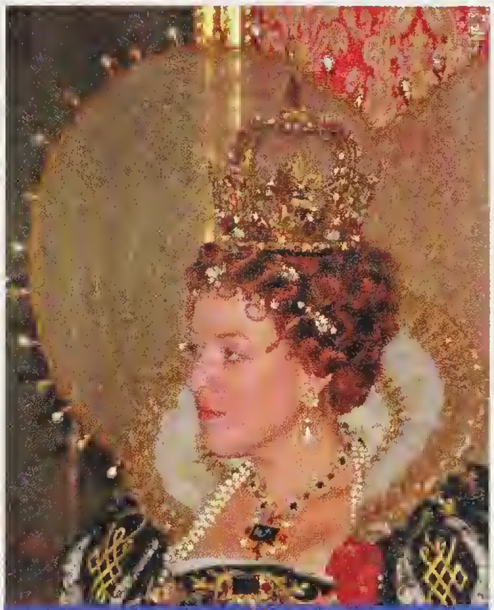
Cape Lookout National Seashore consists of 56 miles of undeveloped beach stretched over barrier islands from the Ocracoke Inlet on the northeast to Beaufort Inlet on the Southeast. Pristine nature is a main attraction — there are no restaurants or grocery stores within Cape Lookout National Seashore. Lodging options are camping or rustic cabins for rent. At the south end of the Seashore, visitors can climb Cape Lookout Lighthouse and tour the Keepers Quarter Museum in season. 252-728-2250 or nps.gov/calo.

Fort Raleigh National Historic Site in Manteo is known as England's first home in the new world, protecting and preserving known portions of England's first New World settlements from 1584 to 1590. Its visitor center features exhibits, a video and bookstore. A popular nearby attraction is "The Lost Colony," an outdoor drama that runs from mid-June to mid-August and tells the story of the early settlers. 252-473-2111 or nps.gov/fora.

Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills commemorates Orville and Wilbur Wright and the first successful airplane flights in 1903. A visitor's center shares details about their lives and glider experiments. 252-473-2111 or nps.gov/wrbr.

Leah Chester-Davis has her own business, Chester-Davis Communications (chester-davis.com), specializing in food, farm and lifestyle brands and organizations.


Cape Hatteras Lighthouse


Actor portrays Queen Elisabeth in "The Lost Colony" in Manteo.

Revolutionary War battlefields

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park is the site of the largest, most hotly contested battle (1781) of the Revolutionary War's Southern Campaign. Two of three signers of the Declaration of Independence who were from North Carolina are buried on the battlefield. Learn about the birth of our nation through exhibits, film, and other collections at its visitor's center in Greensboro. 336-288-1776 or nps.gov/guco/planyourvisit.

Moores Creek National Battlefield is the site of the first Patriot victory in the American Revolution, which ended British authority in the colony and stalled British invasion of the South for four and a half years. It led North Carolina to be the first colony to instruct its delegates to the 1776 Continental Congress to vote for independence. 910-283-5591 or nps.gov/mocr.

N.C. State Parks centennial celebration

System serves as a mighty economic and tourism engine

By Renee C. Gannon

North Carolina's State Parks set an attendance record in 2015, welcoming 17.3 million visitors to the state's 41 parks and recreational areas, an increase of 1.7 million from 2014. The attendance figure is expected to grow again in 2016, when the state's park system celebrates a centennial of providing history, outdoor recreation and education to visitors.

In March 1915, after a group of citizens urged the government to protect the Summit of Mount Mitchell (the highest peak in the eastern U.S. at 6,684 feet above Yancey County) the N.C. General Assembly authorized Mount Mitchell as the first North Carolina State Park. With the property acquired by the state in 1916, the first state parks system in the nation began.

This year, North Carolina celebrates 100 years of state parks growth, from 525 acres on Mount Mitchell to more than 228,000 acres across the state today. Visitors travel through the gates of these parks to learn more about an area's bio-diversity, history and culture, escape into wilderness, grab a picnic under a tree, paddle the waterways, hike various levels of trails, follow the footprints of critters and breathe in the smells of the surrounding flora.

The centennial celebration began with the First Day Hikes on Jan. 1. More than 3,000 walkers traversed an estimated 7,000 miles of guided hikes along state park trails on New Year's Day.

From the mountains to the coast, the state park system offers something for everyone. According to the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, visitors can look for the Venus flytrap in the wetlands at Carolina Beach State Park, hike under the oldest-known longleaf pines in the Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve, or experience a temperate rain forest and waterfalls rising 2,000 feet in just four miles within the Gorges State Park—the western-most park in the state and one of the newest parks. City dwellers in the Triangle area can take a nature respite amongst the wooded trails, quiet creeks and lake at William B. Umstead State Park in Raleigh. History buffs can relive Civil War battles at Fort Fisher and Fort Macon, with the latter, located near Atlantic Beach, just named State Park of the Year.

"This pearly strand of state parks helps define who we are as North Carolinians," said N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation division director

Elk Knob State Park features one of the highest peaks in North Carolina's High Country.

Fort Macon State Park is the site of a restored Civil War-era fort.

Welcome to
Gorges State Park

Jane Gannon

Gorges State Park boasts waterfalls and sheer rock walls.

ELEVATION HERE
6,578 FEET

Mount Mitchell State Park is the highest point east of the Mississippi.

Mike Murphy. "The state parks system is a source of pride, having grown … to nearly a quarter-million acres of breathtaking landscapes, cradling lush forests, pristine waters and valued species — and serving more than 15 million visitors each year. These iconic landmarks represent something that's more vaguely defined yet speaks to us in a direct way and is directly connected to tradition, legacy and an outright love of the 'goodliest land under the cope of heaven.'"

The park system continues to grow, with eight new state parks opening since 2000, including two formerly owned privately with the state purchasing some or all of the property (Chimney Rock State Park and Grandfather Mountain State Park). These parks include Elk Knob State Park outside of Boone, Dismal Swamp State Park located in the northeastern part of the state along the N.C./Va. Border, and Carvers Creek State Park, the first state park opened in the Sandhills region.

Find a celebration near you

Centennial celebrations are being held across the state throughout the year. Events include bluegrass folk and beach concerts, walk/run events, fishing tournaments, nature education and military appreciation days.

Four parks will host Signature Events: Fort Macon on April 2–24, Mount Mitchell on August 25–26, Mayo River State Park on October 8 and Crowders Mountain on October 30.

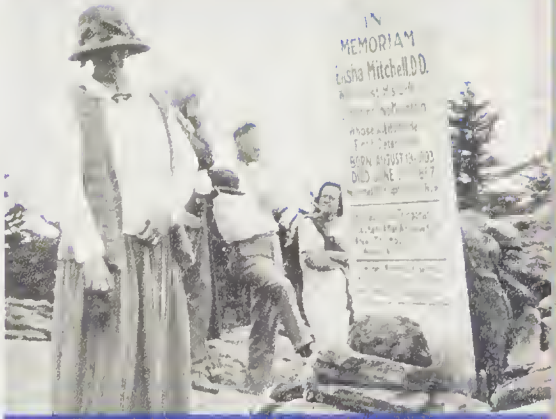
For more information about the N.C. State Parks centennial celebration, visit ncparks.gov/100/celebrate-our-centennial. The site features upcoming events as well as a video, "Here in this Place," which focuses on the sights and sounds across the park system. The UNC-TV documentary "Saving the Best: North Carolina State Parks at 100" is also on this site.

For more information about the state park system's history, visit ncpedia.org/ncparks/part1 for in-depth coverage and timeline.

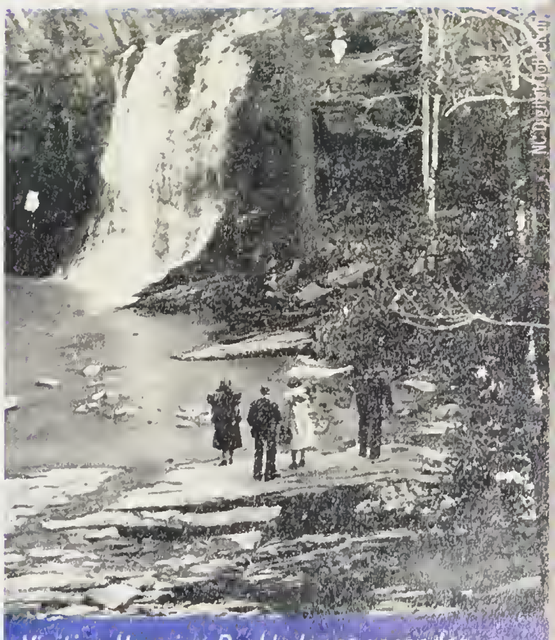
For a look at historic photos added to the State Library of North Carolina Digital Collection, visit digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/home/collections/nc-state-parks to peer into the past as visitors explored the parks.

Information on the all N.C. State Parks can be found at ncparks.gov as well as on a mobile app called N.C. State Parks Guide by Pocket Ranger, free for both iOS and Android.

Visitors to Chimney Rock salute the flag, circa 1920s.

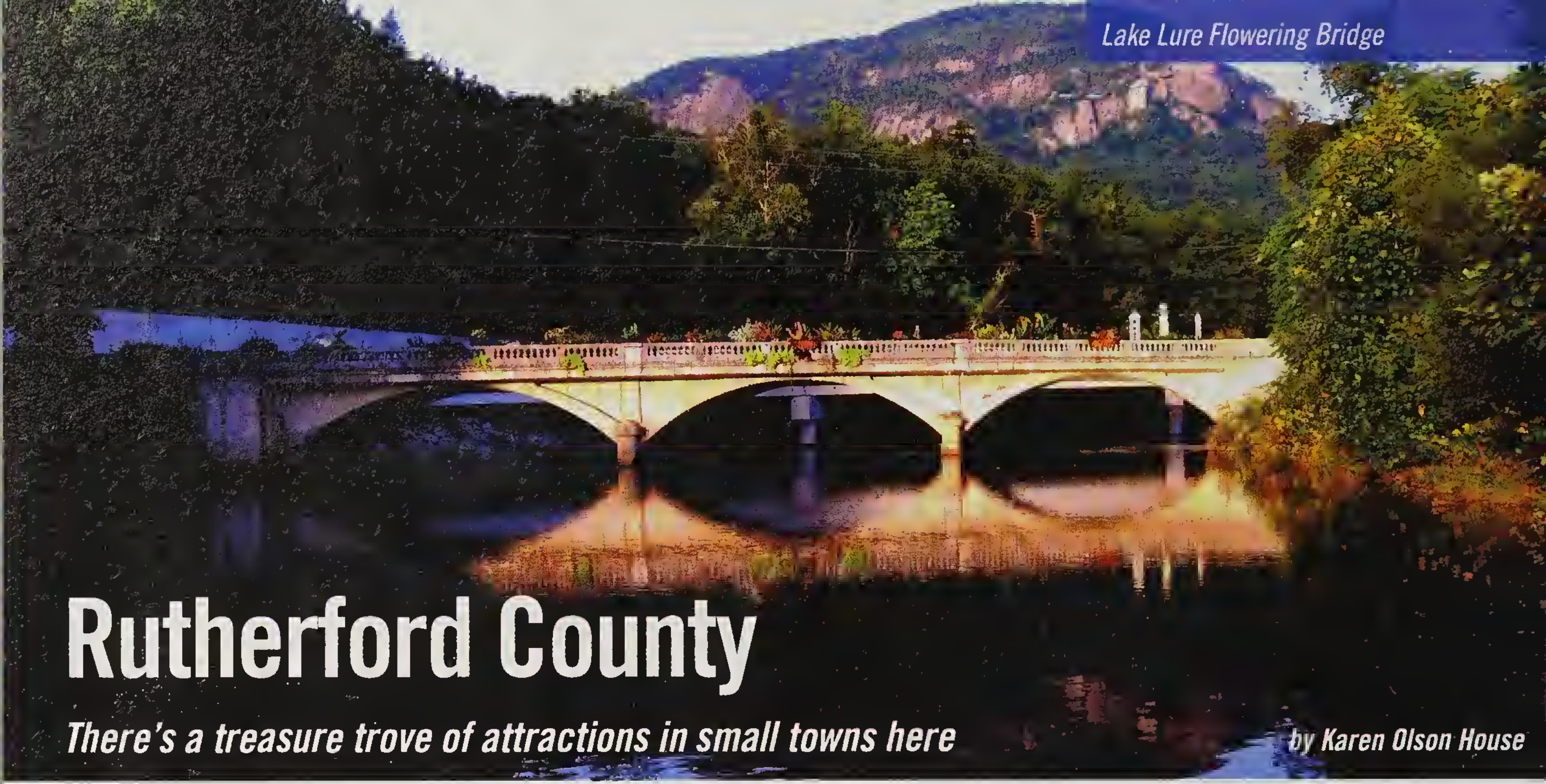


Group of visitors at the Elisha Mitchell memoriam atop Mount Mitchell.



NC Digital Collections

Visiting Hanging Rock's lower cascades, circa 1945



Lake Lure Flowering Bridge

Rutherford County

There's a treasure trove of attractions in small towns here

by Karen Olson House

Finding travel gems is just the best. You may have heard about, or visited, Chimney Rock and Lake Lure. They are wonderful, indeed. But perhaps you haven't yet discovered their engaging, neighboring towns, nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Rutherfordton

Rutherfordton calls itself "A Minted Original" with good reason. German immigrant Christopher Bechtler minted America's very first one-dollar gold coin here in 1932. A brilliant inventor, Bechtler was so enterprising he designed special flooring at his home's doors to catch gold dust that fell from those who entered. He was a renowned gunsmith as well. Visitors can tour his historic 1838 Bechtler House to see his original coin press, interpretive displays, photographs and artifacts, then visit Bechtler's mint site three miles away. 828-286-9977 or visitncgold.com

On Main Street, the imaginative *KidSenses* features 14 interactive exhibit areas. There's Studio K, a TV station, and Pueblito, a bilingual exhibit with a pretend kitchen and restaurant. Also showcased: Rutherford County's textile history. Kids use looms to create trendy patterns or peer through high-powered microscopes to examine fabrics and other specimens such as human hair. There's also a pet hospital, fire station, and scientific areas that cleverly explain gravity and gears. Plus a 7,500-square-foot Children's Garden, open in season. Ask about maker activities that include 3-D printing. 828-286-2120 or kidsenses.org

Outdoor adventures

Choices in this beautiful area are abundant, and include fly-fishing, golfing, hunting, kayaking, canoeing, mountain biking, horseback riding, rock climbing, gold panning, gem finding and ziplining. Visit rutherfordtourism.com and click on "Outdoor Activities."

Rutherford County is home to many craftspeople. *Rutherford County Visual Arts Center* showcases their fine wares for sale, which include paintings, pottery, glass, gourds, photography, sculpture and jewelry. 828-288-5009 or rcvag.com

Out on Highway 64, *Gardenwoods* is another inspiring place to find handmade gifts for your home or yard. 828-288-3556 or mountaingreenenterprises.com

If you like aviation, consider eating at *57 Alpha Airport Café,* a little gem renowned to pilots and general for its "plane" hamburgers and authentic Mexican fare. 828-286-1677 or 57alpha.com

Forest City

Give yourself at least an hour at the *Bennett Classics Antique Car Museum.* It boasts more than 70 vehicles collected by the Bennett brothers, ranging from a 1928 Depot Hack and Mayberry Sheriff's car signed by Don Knotts (aka Barney Fife) to farm tractors and Mack trucks. 828-247-1767 or bennettclassics.com

To keep your nostalgia vibe going, head for *The Fountain at Smith's Drugs.* Twirl on a red and silver bar stool, then order a pimento sandwich or roast beef and pepper jack cheese in a spinach and herb wrap. Just want a snack? Try their livermush or a frothy milkshake. 828-245-4591 or smithsdrugsfc.com/fountain

Spindale

This crossroads offers Carolina-brewed beer at *Barley's Taproom and Pizzeria,* 828-288-8388 or barleystaproomspindale.com, and delicious java, plus lunch and dinner options, at *Spinning Bean Café and Coffee Shop,* 828-287-5650 or spinningbean.com

Isothermal Community College has an active *performing arts center* (828-286-9990 or foundationshows.org) and a beloved National Public Radio station, *WNCW* (tune in to 88.7 FM).

Bostic

Washburn's General Store, family-run since 1931, is fun to explore. It either has what you need, or don't need but desire. 828-245-4129 or washburnstore.com

Ford
FRUEHAUF

Bennett Classics Antique Car Museum

KidSenses in Rutherfordton

Chimney Rock State Park

Spirit lovers can tour *Blue Ridge Distilling Company,* which makes Defiant Whisky, from April 1 through early January. Call ahead. 828-245-2041 or defiantwhisky.com

Chimney Rock State Park

At its top, you can see gorgeous views up to 75 miles away on a clear day. There are several trails for hikers. Most are within the fee-based Chimney Rock access; a free trail is in the Rumbling Bald Climbing Area. They range from kid-friendly walks to moderately strenuous treks to the top of Chimney Rock Mountain and the edge of *Hickory Nut Falls* (shown in "The Last of the Mohicans.")

At the park's entrance, *Old Rock Café* sells burgers, wraps and salads, with patio dining by *the Rocky Broad River,* or order a "hiker's lunch" to go, 828-625-2329. The park's *Sky Lounge* sells sandwiches and ice cream and includes a gift shop, 800-277-9611. Website information for both: chimneyrockpark.com

The staircase hike to the top is 491 steps, or take the elevator 26 stories to the top.

Note: At press time, the elevator was closed for servicing. For updates: 828-625-1823 or ncparks.gov/chimney-rock-state-park

Chimney Rock village

Medina's Village Bistro is renowned for organic, local fare. Dogs are welcome on the patio. 828-989-4529 or medinasvillagebistro.com.

Lake Lure

This alluring body of water in Hickory Nut Gorge was the conception of Dr. Lucious B. Morse. Dr. Morse, who sought better health, envisioned a resort community. Completed in 1927, the manmade lake has a 27-mile shoreline.

Pontoon boat tours and cruises are a wonderful way to explore the lake. You'll get to see where "Dirty Dancing" was filmed, and learn more history. Rumor has it, some skipper guides sometimes gilded the lily when it came to relating facts. They were taken to task, so chances are good you will hear true lake lore.

Lake Lure has a public swimming beach and water park, open Memorial Day through Labor Day in the Town Center. Admission fee. It's near the Welcome Center. 828-625-9983 or townoflakelure.com

Once a highway over the Rocky Broad River, *Lake Lure Flowering Bridge* was transformed by locals into a unique pedestrian garden bridge with stonework, creative ironwork and colorful plants. For a nice, two-mile hike that includes it, start at the entrance of *Morse Park.* Mosey through the park along the lake, enjoy the bridge, then stroll back along the boardwalk to the beach. lakelurefloweringbridge.org

Dining options include *La Strada,* 828-625-1118 or lastradaatlakelure.com, and *Larkins on the Lake,* 828-625-4075 or larkinsonthelake.com.

To learn more

800-849-5998
rutherfordtourism.com

Karen Olson House is a contributing editor for Carolina Country.

To see videos on some of these attractions, go to carolinacountry.com.

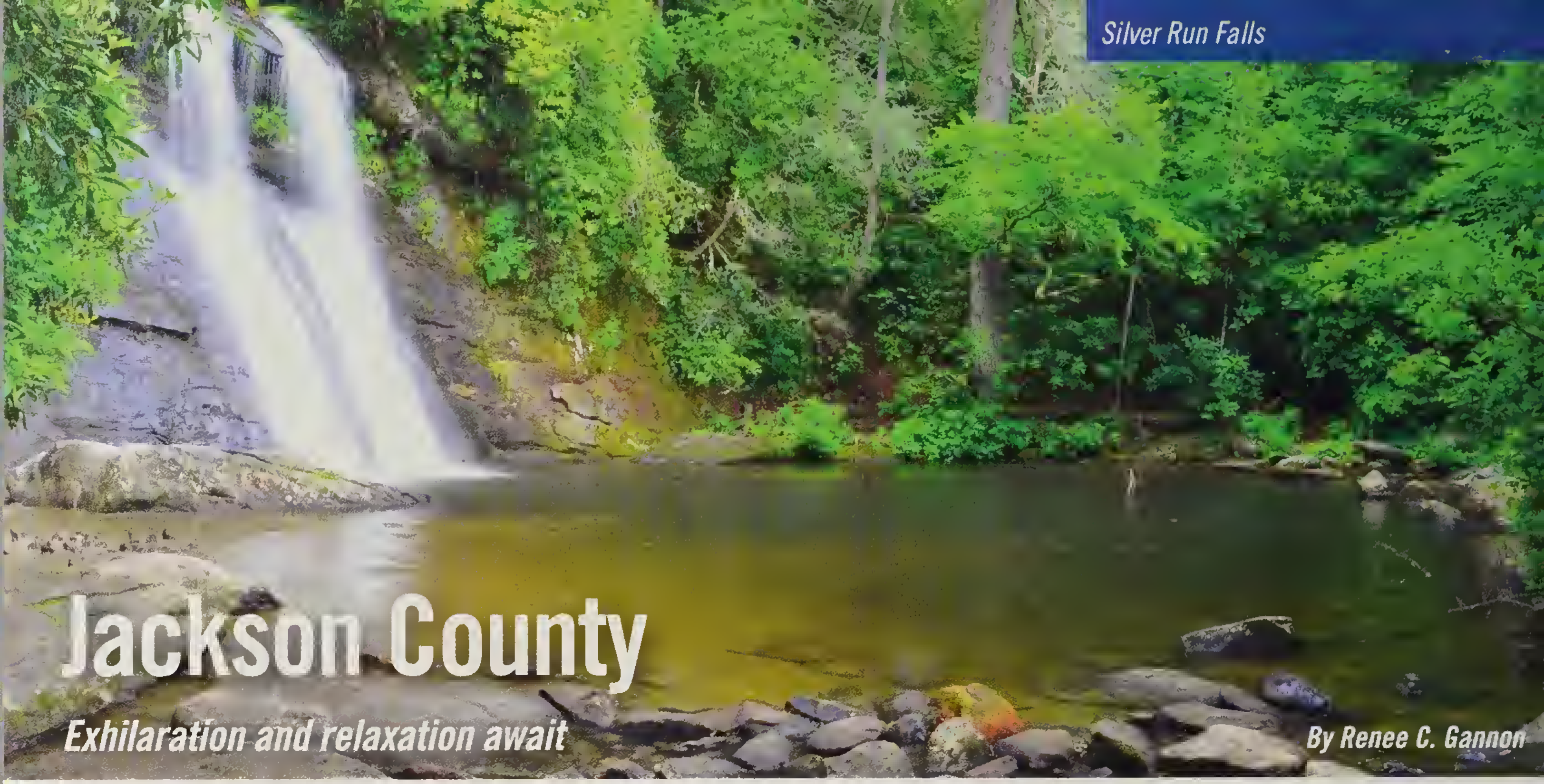
Area accommodations

They range widely, from house rentals and rustic cabins to modest motels, campgrounds and elegant inns and lodges. There's even an RV park that caters to dogs (Four Paws Kingdom). Click "lodging" on rutherfordtourism.com and select your subcategories.

Tryon Resort

Although not in Rutherford County, this nearby equestrian complex in Mill Spring, Polk County, is worth a mention. Its Saturday Night Lights series showcases Olympic-level riders and admission is free for spectators to equine events. The general public can also enjoy free carousel rides, music, and buskery such as stilt-walkers. There are also shops, restaurants and lodging.

It's about 20 minutes from Lake Lure. 828-863-1000 or tryon.com


Silver Run Falls

Jackson County

Exhilaration and relaxation await

By Renee C. Gannon

The Graveyard Fields. Would the hike in the summer rain be worth it? After traipsing through overgrown rhododendron tunnels, across open fields (whose blueberry bushes would soon bear fruit), and up rock steps between hardwoods, the muddy hike and rain-soaked shirt proved worthy with the first glimpse of the *Upper Falls.*

And no, this graveyard does not hold buried bodies. Its name derives from wind-thrown tree trunks covered in moss that resembled grave markers. The trunks, however, were destroyed by fire in 1925, but the name remains.

With elevation ranging from 2,000 to more than 6,000 feet, Jackson County is home to 19 distinct waterfalls and too many hiking and multi-use trails to count, all located in and amongst the peaks and valleys of the *Blue Ridge Mountains.* Five lakes and four major rivers also dot and traverse the county.

The county's small towns offer relaxation and respite from outdoor activities. Balsam, Cashiers, Cherokee, Cullowhee, Dillsboro, Glenville and Sapphire all provide the "ahhh" one looks for after a hard day of hiking, climbing, fishing, golfing, skiing, rafting or boating.

Whiteside Mountain is also home of the "dancing bear", a shadow that appears at sunset in late October.

Jackson County Tourism

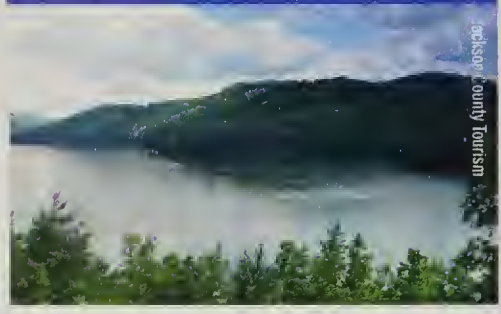
Waterfalls and outdoor life

Located in the southwestern corner of North Carolina, Jackson County's climate is ideal for adventure. Much of the county is situated within the *Nantahala National Forest* and the *Great Smoky Mountains National Park.*

For waterfall enthusiasts, this is the place to be. Part of the fun lies with the names: *Tuckaseegee, Hurricane* and *Silver Run, Courthouse* and *Juneywhank, Turtleback* and *Rainbow,* as well as the popular *Sliding Rock, Bridal Veil* and *Looking Glass.* Many offer easily accessible viewing, such as the highest waterfall east of the Rockies, *Whitewater Falls,* which drops 811 feet. The Whitewater overlook is situated along a paved path, less than a mile up from the parking lot.

Hiking trails abound, with many leading to the waterfalls, while others simply offer beautiful views across the Blue Ridge Mountains. The moderate to strenuous trails lead to views that are worth the sweat effort. But easy hikes with stunning views do exist, such as the 1.5-mile round trip excursion to *Black Balsam Bald* with its 360-degree view of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the 2-mile loop *Whiteside Mountain trail* that follows alongside the Eastern Continental Divide at 4,930 feet.

Lakes in the area, such as Lake Glenville, offer leisurely time on the water for swimming, SUP boards and boating.


Jackson County Tourism

Bunching small hikes in one area for a day excursion, such as *Richland Balsam, Devil's Courthouse, Black Balsam Bald* and *Graveyard Fields,* saves hiking and drive times. A Jackson County hiking and waterfalls guide can be found at mountainloversnc.com. Local hiking trails can also be found in the Western Carolina University Trail System in Cullowhee.

For those inclined to travel above the trails, the *Vordach Zip Line Park* in Sapphire offers a 10-stop zip canopy tour that traverses over ski slopes and through old-growth forests. 828-743-7633 or sapphirevalley.com

If water and not hardwood is your choice for adventure, Jackson County offers four whitewater rivers with rapids ranging from Class I to Class IV, including the Tuckasagee and Nantahala Rivers. The rivers' currents are approachable for both novice and experienced kayakers and rafters.

Jackson County also boasts the

Jackson County Tourism

Holly Greenia on the Vordach zipline

Renee Gannon

Rainbow Falls in Pisgah National Forest

Jackson County Tourism

Oconaluftee Valley Overlook in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park

only fly fishing trail in the nation. The *Western North Carolina Fly Fishing Trail* encompasses more than 70 miles of rivers and streams, with brook, brown and rainbow trout among the top catches. A map, descriptions and GPS coordinates for 15 stops can be found at flyfishingtrail.com.

Relax and unwind

When you exit the trails, put down your paddle or fishing rod, low-key adventures abound amongst the towns of Jackson County. Locally owned inns, restaurants and shops from Balsam to Sapphire provide the key to unwind. Evolution Wine Kitchen in Sylva (828-631-9856 or evolutionwinekitchen.com), Buck's Coffee in Cashiers (828-743-9997), Coach's Bistro in Dillsboro (828-586-0265 or jarretthouse.com) and the Canyon Kitchen at Lonesome Valley in Sapphire (828-743-7967 or lonesomevalley.com) are just a few of the food offerings.

Sylva is the epicenter for the Jackson County Ale Trail, with three breweries downtown: *Heinzelmannchen Brewery* (828-621-4466 or visit yourgnometownbrewery.com), featuring crafted German ales; *Innovation Brewing* (828-586-9678 or visit innovation-brewing.com), featuring 20-plus tap beer options; and the just opened *Sneak E Squirrel* (828-586-6440), a brewery and full-service kitchen. All are located within walking distance of restaurants and often have food trucks available on site. In Cashiers, *Whiteside Brewing Co.* is scheduled to open in June.

The *Great Smoky Mountain Railroad* still arrives on a daily basis in Dillsboro from Bryson City. Dillsboro has become an arts and crafts mecca and is home to the Western North Carolina Pottery Festival. Pottery, glasswork, photography and various regional arts and crafts populate its downtown. Artists improve their techniques in galleries such as *Tree House Pottery* (828-226-3833 or treehousepotterync.com), where owner Travis Berning commented while molding clay: "It takes less than four minutes to throw a pot, but it takes seven years to make a good pot."

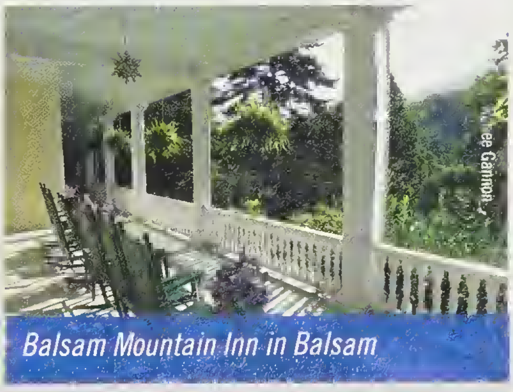
No matter which small town you choose to visit, all beckon you to step back in time, to unplug and relax—before you slip on the hiking boots again when the nearby trails call.

To learn more

800-962-1911
mountainloversnc.com

Area accommodations

Balsam Mountain Inn, Balsam, dates back to 1908, when Balsam Gap rail station just below the inn welcomed visitors. The station is gone, but the all-wood mountain hotel still welcomes guests to sit and rock on the 100-foot porches. The inn has a restaurant and is 2 miles from the Blue Ridge Parkway. 828-456-9498 or balsammountaininn.net


Renee Gannon

Balsam Mountain Inn in Balsam

The Jarrett House, Dillsboro, dates back to 1884 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The inn flourished in the heyday of railroad travel when travelers headed to the mountains to escape the summer heat. Many would walk to the inn from the depot for dinner to enjoy fried ham, red-eyed gravy, buttermilk biscuits and vegetables. The menu is still a favorite today. 828-586-0265 or jarretthouse.com

High Hampton Inn & Spa, Cashiers, is a 1,400-acre resort featuring a health club, spa, private lake, gardens and woods surrounding a historic country inn. 800-334-2551 or highhamptoninn.com

The Innisfree Inn, Glenville, overlooks Lake Glenville. The Victorian bed and breakfast offers unique guest rooms and suites. 828-743-2946 or innisfreeinn.com

Hampton Inn & Suites, Sapphire, not your typical chain hotel, is locally owned and operated. 828-743-4545 or blueridgemtnshotel.com

Kiwanis Miracle Playground and BRAX Stadium PPD Miracle Baseball field

Accessible attractions:

Awareness, resources make travel easier for people who are disabled

by Karen Olson House

It's a real understatement to say people who have disabilities encounter challenges when they visit most travel attractions. Those with mobility issues encounter steep stairs and too-high displays. Those hard of hearing work to follow videos without captions and narrated tours without scripts. Those with vision loss can't read key directional signage, not to mention exhibit posters.

The reasons for these challenges include tight budgets and lack of awareness. An older attraction's facility may not be updated to the design standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act. But a facility can also technically meet ADA standards for accessible design but still not be fully accessible.

"The letter of the law doesn't always mean true access," says Dr. Cynthia Edwards. Edwards, who has multiple sclerosis, recently described how a public restroom can meet ADA requirements, but be extremely difficult to use in a wheelchair due to elements such as poor door placements and tight spaces.

Another key issue: awareness about assistance. Like any traveler, persons who are disabled may need help but facility staff and the general public are uncertain as to how to offer it. They may avoid people with disabilities because they are not sure how to approach them. Edwards, a psychology professor at Meredith College in Raleigh, was happily surprised during a trip in Paris when staff at tourist attractions consistently made a point of asking if she needed assistance by speaking directly to her, as opposed to talking to the friend pushing her wheelchair.

Edwards points out one inexpensive solution would be to create a short training video on accessibility and etiquette for distribution to North Carolina attractions. To accomplish this, she suggests creating a small taskforce with travel professionals, curators, videomakers and persons with varied disabilities.

ACCESS North Carolina guide

This helpful, 502-page pdf provides tourist site accessibility information, with clear icons that indicate if a site is accessible, partially accessible or not accessible for a person with a specific disability. It offers general information about each tourist site and specifics dear to people with disabilities.

The guide's main categories are Physical Disabilities (mobility), Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Vision Loss (including blind), with notes about other disabilities as well. For example, a listing may say a site's tranquil setting may benefit visitors with autism and visitors with mental disabilities (Roanoke/Cashie River Center). It also notes practices like waiving the fee for an aide accompanying a person with a disability and describes partially good/partially bad aspects such as there is recorded narration but no script available.

Author Philip Woodward has been writing it since 2009. Although budget cuts last year eliminated all funding for the ACCESS North Carolina program and Woodward's access specialist position, he was able to update the pdf last fall and then he transferred to the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities. Previously printed and distributed, it is now available only online.

Woodward has a special passion for accessibility, as he's had profound hearing loss since age 4. His keen ability to experience a site as one would with different disabilities and knowledgeable advocacy have proved invaluable (not to mention his patience with a tape measure).

He encourages tourist attractions and individuals with disabilities and their family members and travel companions to send him their updates, photos, travel experiences, and questions via accessnorthcarolina@gmail.com, or call him at 919-518-9525 (office VideoPhone).

Attractions

These edited descriptions were taken from information in the 2015 ACCESS North Carolina pdf. The Interstates 1-77 and 1-95 are dividing lines for the regions here. Consult ACCESS North Carolina's pdf and the site itself for more details.

To access or download the pdf in English and Spanish versions, visit http://ow.ly/ZgRgt

Mountains

LifeSpan's Blue Sky Nature Center

Troutman ▸ Free

704-873-5646 ▸ lifespanservices.org

Certified Wildlife Habitat to meet needs of children and adults with developmental and physical disabilities, includes sensory and horticultural gardens, viewing decks, picnic area and amphitheater. One-fourth mile hardscaped walking trail with gentle slopes, at least 4-feet wide, ramp to lookout and benches, water fountain no more than 3-feet high.

Flat Rock Playhouse

Flat Rock ▸ Admission fee
828-693-0731 ▸ flatrockplayhouse.org

Substantial Accessibility. Professional theater company that stages a variety of productions each year, ranging from musical to comedy, Broadway standards to original works.

Cradle of Forestry in America Forest Discovery Center

Pisgah Forest ▸ Admission fee
828-877-3130 ▸ cradleofforestry.com

Fifteen hands-on exhibits, café, 18-minute movie, store activities include riding on the fire-fighting helicopter simulator over a forest fire and going underground to see which animals live under the forest floor. Camouflaged wheelchair lift; Braille trail map and tactile pillow tree wall; Adventure Zone trail, developed in consultation with the Autism Society of North Carolina.

Ashe County Cheese

West Jefferson ▸ Free
800-445-1378 ▸ ashecountycheese.com

Cheese plant contains a factory-viewing room where visitors can observe different varieties of cheese and butter being made, store sells products made in the factory, other food, gifts. Floor-to-ceiling window provides a view into the processing area; benches for resting.

Piedmont

North Carolina Transportation Museum

Salisbury ▸ Admission fee includes train ride
704-636-2889 ▸ nctrans.org

Includes exhibits, Barber Junction Depot (1913), reception center; Master Mechanic's Office (1911); Flue Shop (1924); and Bob Julian Roundhouse (1924). Train ride has a wheelchair lift available with 15-minute notice, six spaces for wheelchair tie-downs, wheelchairs available, exhibit signs are wheelchair-accessible.

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park

Greensboro ▸ Free
336-288-1776 ▸ nps.gov/guco

American Revolution battleground is site of March 15, 1781 battle between American and British troops. Visitor center, auto, bicycle and foot trails, including 2.5 miles of battlefield walking trails, 28 monuments, 10-minute animated Battle Map Program, exhibits and bookstore. "Another Such Victory" film has a box that displays closed captions; 20-minute Tactile Map Program and Braille restroom signs, "Field Musick" exhibit plays battlefield music.

Discovery Place

Charlotte ▸ Admission fee
704-372-6261 ▸ discoveryplace.org
Accessibility Coordinator: 704-348-1976

Substantial Accessibility. Discovery Place exists to ignite wonder, and provides extraordinary experiences that engage people in active exploration of science and nature.

Carolina Performing Arts

Chapel Hill ▸ Admission fee
919-843-3333 ▸ carolinaperformingarts.org

Substantial Accessibility. Carolina Performing Arts presents a full spectrum of performing arts: internationally renowned recitalists and orchestras; dance and chamber ensembles; jazz, folk and world music performers; and opera and theater.

North Carolina Botanical Garden

Chapel Hill, NC ▸ Free
919-962-0522 ▸ ncbg.unc.edu

Native plant gardens, nature trails, education center. Ramp to gardens and buildings, Horticulture Therapy Demonstration Garden has five raised beds 22 to 24 inches high, Coastal Garden Bridge has wooden handrails; specific public programs for people with physical and mental disabilities.

NASCAR Hall of Fame

Charlotte ▸ Admission fee
704-654-4400 or 888-902-6463 ▸ nascarhall.com

150,000-square-foot, high-tech venue is an interactive, entertainment attraction honoring NASCAR heritage with artifacts, interactive exhibits, and state-of-the-art theater, restaurant and gear shop. Accessible exhibits include ramps, alternate driving simulator, wheelchair lift; all videos captioned.

North Carolina Veterans Park

Fayetteville ▸ Free
910-433-1457 ▸ ncveteranspark.org

Visitors Center includes Service Ribbon Wall made of fused glass, representing every service medal awarded since the Civil War, unique chandelier made from 33,500 "dog tags" (service member identification tags). Designed to be accessible to veterans with mobility disabilities; some videos captioned with all exhibit panels having descriptions; audio programs, ADA tactile features on specific signage; hands molded by veterans from all 100 N.C. counties that visitors with vision loss and tactile learners could enjoy.

Coast

Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson

Winnabow ▸ Free
910-371-6613 ▸ nchistoricsites.org

Remains of colonial port town of Brunswick, great earth mounds of Confederate States of America's Fort Anderson, St. Philip's Anglican Church and artifact exhibits. Path through visitor center has a ramp, path to the fort has a bench along the way and ramp with handrails, excavated foundations are visible at low heights; script available for orientation video; site director will give a private tour to a visitor with vision loss upon requests.

MORE ADVENTURES

Everyone's Beanstalk Playground

Morganton ▸ Free
(828) 437-8863 ▸ http://ow.ly/ZgQYp

This adventure playground in Catawba Meadows Park focuses on play for all: 40 elements include wheelchair swings, gigantic aerial net Sky Hammocks, more than 100 feet of ADA walkways through nine treehouses, slides and a universal zipline. It's next to Beanstalk Journey Zip Line.

Beanstalk Journey Zip Line

Morganton ▸ Admission fee
800-979-3370 ▸ beanstalkjourneys.com

This blend of zip tour and a ropes course whisks folks through a labyrinth of educational treehouses with 360-degree views. Also in Catawba Meadows Park, this zipline hosts a large group from the North Carolina School for the Deaf annually. Last year, it hosted a large group of children with sight loss.

Nantahala Outdoor Center

Bryson City ▸ Admission fee
828-785-4844 ▸ noc.com

NOC's mission is to share the outdoors with everyone and senior guides can tailor an experience to those who are disabled. Each summer it hosts an Adventure Amputee Camp. Many of the kids have multiple amputations and significant mobility issues, and they go rafting, ziplining and on other adventure activities.

Beanstalk Builders

Everyone's Beanstalk Playground

Horseback Riding

The Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) promotes therapies for individuals with special needs. To find a member/premiere-accredited centers in N.C., visit pathintl.org/path-intl-centers/find-center. You can enter select disabilities such as Down syndrome in a drop-down menu.

Hunting & Fishing

N.C. Accessible Outdoors offers opportunities for persons with disabilities, includes assisting access to favorable game and fish areas and allowing the use of equipment designed for specific disabilities. 919-707-0010 of ncwildlife.org/Enjoying/OutdoorActivities/DisabledOpportunities.aspx.

Ski Resorts

Some offer adaptive ski clinics and programs, including: Beech Mountain Ski Resort in Banner Elk (800-438-2093 or beechmountainresort.com) and Appalachian Ski Mountain in Blowing Rock (828-295-7828 and appskimtn.com).

Enjoying a beach access mat in Nags Head.

Going to the beach

Beach wheelchairs available

There are at least 24 locations that include:

- Emerald Isle: Five Landeez wheelchairs, 252-354-2445
- Oak Island: Two Cape Quests and one Landeez. 910-278-5518
- Sunset Beach: Two Surf Chairs, 910-579-3808
- Wrightsville Beach: Five beach wheelchairs, 910-256-7925

Bogue Banks accessible areas

Public beach access areas here that feature dune walkways, access for people with mobility disabilities to the dune crest and beach, marked accessible parking spaces and either an accessible deck or gazebo include:

- The Bathhouse: West Drive and Atlantic Boulevard, at the base of the Atlantic Beach Causeway
- Salter Path Access: The middle of Bogue Banks between Hoffman Beach Road and Frost Lane

Beach mat locations

Places with rubber mats that allow a standard wheelchair, walker, Rollator, infant/child stroller or other mobility assistance device to get across the sand include:

- Jennette's Pier in Nags Head at milepost 17
- Eighth St. Beach access on the Nags Head/Kill Devil Hills town line at milepost 9.

Beach walker locations

- Includes North Topsail Beach, 910-328-0042

See pages 366–369 (English) and pages 350–351 (Spanish) in ACCESS North Carolina for more beach accessibility information.

For a mobile map that notes accessibility, visit http://arcg.is/1GI1Nib.

P[illegible] Woodwar

Lions Water Adventure in Kinston

Lions Water Adventure

Kinston ▸ Admission fee
252-939-1330 ▸ lionswateradventure.com

Waterpark features 550-foot-long lazy river, 5,000-square-foot kiddie pool featuring fountains, slides, water dump buckets and water sprays, three water slides and full-service concession stand. Aqua wheelchair, ramps into the pool and a zero-entry pool and lazy river; audio description available and on website; audio sound at park features; bright, large pathway guidance; menus with Braille or large print.

Frisco Native American Museum & Natural History Center

Frisco ▸ Admission fee
252-995-4440 ▸ nativeamericanmuseum.org

Center contains Native American artifacts, exhibits and natural history displays. Galleries filled with native art and artifacts include information on Native Americans across the U.S. Several acres of nature trails winding through lush maritime forest, spacious pavilion overlooks salt-marsh water. Large-print, routed trail signs, museum has large-print signs and offers special programs for visitors with vision loss, including nature trail walks; staff has provided special programs for adults and children with physical and mental disabilities.

Jennette's Pier

Nags Head ▸ Admission fee
252-255-1501 ▸ jennettespier.net

World-class fishing, grand pier house and public bathhouse perched atop wide beaches, 1,000-foot-long ocean pier. Inside pier house are educational exhibits, fish displays and a gift, snack and tackle shop. Standard wheelchairs, a beach wheelchair and golf cart assistance from parking lot to pier upon request, pier offers two accessible fishing areas with a lowered railing; Braille signs, and audio exhibits. Site hosts the N.C. Lions Club's annual Visually Impaired Persons Fishing Tournament every October.

North Carolina History Center at Tryon Palace

New Bern ▸ Admission fee
800-767-1560 ▸ tryonpalace.org

Rotating exhibitions, wide variety of interactive historical activities, The Pepsi Family Center, Regional History Museum and riverwalk café. Center is fully mobile accessible; all videos captioned, sign language interpreter with advance notice; "hands-on" policy for visitors with vision loss; many interactive, hands-on exhibits could benefit tactile learners.

Ability Garden at New Hanover County Arboretum

Wilmington ▸ Free
910-798-7660 ▸ arboretum.nhcgov.com

Seven-acre garden's horticultural therapy program offers inclusive, professionally directed activities. Ability Garden showcases examples of accessible gardening through raised beds, wheelchair-accessible tabletop gardens and adaptive garden tools. Please make arrangements prior to visiting.

Kiwanis Miracle Playground

Wilmington ▸ Free
910-508-6788 ▸ miracleleaguewilm.org

9,000-square-foot playground includes wheelchair-accessible play structures on a specialized non-latex rubber turf, and features a double-wide ramp, five slides, seven swings, countless climbing structures, talk tubes, a children's playground for toddlers and multiple sensory walls and structures for children with cognitive disabilities. Adjacent to BRAX Stadium PPD Miracle baseball field, which has a surface designed to allow wheelchairs and other mobile devices to safely move from base to base.

Karen Olson House is a contributing editor for Carolina Country.

To read more selected attractions, visit carolinacountry.com.

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BEACH APPARTMENT, NORTH MYRTLE BEACH, SC. 1BR/1B. Sleeps 5. 843-685-7716.

Gold Maps

FUN, HOW TO PAN. Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, Alabama, California. 1-321-783-4595. WWW.GOLDMAPS.COM

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Miscellaneous

PLAY GOSPEL SONGS BY EAR—$12.95. "Learn Gospel Music." Chording, runs, fills—$12.95. Both $24. Davidsons, 6727C Metcalf, Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66204. 913-262-4982.

FREE BOOKS/DVDS—SOON THE "MARK" of the beast will be enforced as church and state unite! Let the Bible reveal. The Bible Says, POB 99, Lenoir City, TN 37771. 1-888-211-1715. thebiblesaystruth@yahoo.com

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Grilled Sweet Potato Wedges

- 4 large sweet potatoes, cut into ½-inch wedges
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Dipping Sauce

- ½ cup reduced-fat mayonnaise
- ½ cup fat-free plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon chili powder

Place potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 4–5 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain; pat dry with paper towels. Sprinkle with garlic salt and pepper.

Grill, covered, over medium heat for 10–12 minutes or until tender, turning once.

In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, yogurt and seasonings. Serve with sweet potatoes.

Yield: 8 servings

Spinach-Stuffed Chicken Parmesan

- 4 cups fresh spinach
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (4 ounces each)
- ½ cup dry whole wheat bread crumbs
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 2 cans (8 ounces each) no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 teaspoon each dried basil and dried oregano
- ¾ cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large skillet, cook the spinach and garlic in oil just until wilted. Drain. Stir in 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper.

Pound chicken breasts with a meat mallet to ½-inch thickness. Spread each with 1 tablespoon spinach mixture. Fold the chicken in half, enclosing filling; secure with toothpicks.

Place bread crumbs and egg in separate shallow bowls. Dip chicken in egg, then roll in crumbs to coat. Place seam side down in an 8-inch square baking dish coated with cooking spray. Bake, uncovered, 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine tomato sauce, basil and oregano. Pour over chicken. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake, uncovered, 10–15 minutes longer or until a thermometer reads 165 degrees. Discard toothpicks before serving.

Yield: 4 servings

Strawberry Angel Dessert

- 1½ cups sugar
- 5 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 package (3 ounces) strawberry gelatin
- 2 cups water
- 2 pounds fresh strawberries, hulled, divided
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- 1 carton (12 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 prepared angel food cake (8–10 ounces), cut into 1-inch cubes

For glaze, in a large saucepan, combine the sugar, cornstarch and gelatin. Add water and stir until smooth. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until mixture begins to boil. Cook and stir 1–2 minutes until thickened. Remove from the heat; cool. Cut half of the strawberries into quarters; fold into glaze.

In a small bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Beat in milk. Fold in whipped topping.

In a 4-quart clear glass bowl, layer half the cake cubes, glaze and cream mixture. Repeat layers. Cut remaining strawberries in half and arrange on top. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.

From Your Kitchen

Neiman Marcus Cookies

- 1 box Duncan Hines yellow cake mix with butter
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 egg
- 1 cup pecans, chopped

Mix above ingredients and press in bottom of greased 10½-by-15½-inch sheet pan.

Topping

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 box powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs

Combine above ingredients with mixer and pour over crust. Bake 40–45 minutes at 350 degrees. When cool, cut into bars.

This recipe comes from Lena Mintz of Shallotte, a member of Brunswick EMC.

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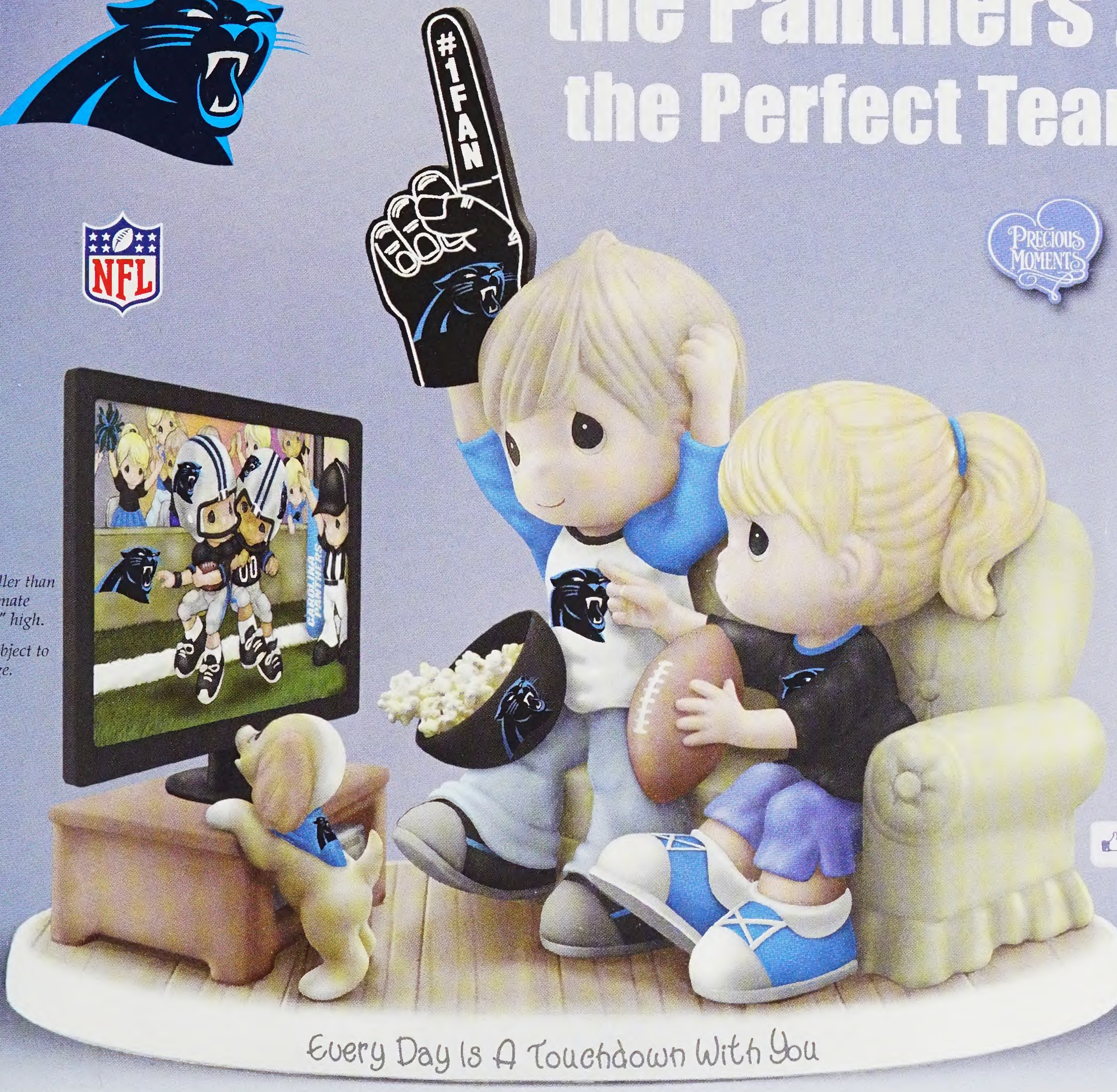

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Important Terms and Conditions: All offers require credit qualification, 24-month commitment with early termination fee and e-bill autopay. Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and eAutoPay. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 4/4/16. 2 Year Commitment: Early termination fee of $20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 3 year price guarantee at $49.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 Plus programming package, Local channels and Regional Sports Networks (where available), and monthly 1st receiver and HD service fees. Included in 3 year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades ($64.99 for AT200, $74.99 for AT250), monthly fees for additional receivers ($7 per additional TV, higher fees may apply for advanced receivers), and monthly DVR service fees ($15 for Hopper or $10 for other models). NOT included in 3 year price guarantee or $49.99 advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), Protection Plan, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: Subject to credit qualification. After 3 mos., you will be billed $60/mo. for HBO, Cinemax, Showtime, Starz and DISH Movie Pack unless you call to cancel. Netflix: Offer expires on April 4, 2016. Valid for twelve (12) months of Netflix Service on the $9.99 (per month) "Two Screens at a Time Streaming Plan" (for total value of $119.88). Hopper w/Sling or other Netflix compatible device and Internet required. Not available with dishNET satellite Internet. Hopper w/Sling or other Netflix compatible device and Internet required. Not available with dishNET satellite Internet. *Existing Netflix customers will return to normal billing after $119.88 credit is exhausted. Offer is not redeemable or refundable for cash, subject to applicable law, and cannot be exchanged for Netflix Gift Subscriptions. You may apply the value of the offer to a different plan, or other services offered by Netflix. Exchanges in this manner may alter the duration of the offer. Netflix service price plans subject to change. Limit one promotion toward each monthly membership fee for your Netflix account. For details, please visit www.netflix.com/termsofuse. . Gift Card: Courtesy of GoDish.com. Requires 24-month commitment. Customer must meet credit and qualification criteria, and sign up for DISH with qualifying packages through 4/4/16. While this offer is available for free, certain other transaction fees and costs, terms, and conditions are associated with the use of this Card. See the Cardholder Agreement for more details. Customer must complete redemption process to receive gift. Redemption Certificate will be sent to customer within 30 days of qualifying DISH service activation. Redemption requires the following: customer's signature and shipping address, proof of DISH service, and payment for shipping and/or handling (payable with cashier's check or money order only). Allow 6-8 weeks from receipt of completed Redemption Certificate for delivery of gift. Neither MetaBank nor Visa is a sponsor, endorser or participant in this promotion. Monthly inactivity fee of $2.95 after 12 consecutive months of inactivity. Lost/stolen replacement card fee of $5.00. Cards issued by MetaBank™, Member FDIC, pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A. Incorporated. See cardholder agreement, which will accompany your card, for more details. VISA® is a registered trademark of Visa International Service Association. Any unclaimed gift card offer is void after 180 days. Other: All packages, programming, features, and functionality are subject to change without notice. Free standard professional installation only. Upfront or additional monthly fees may apply. HBO®, Cinemax® and related channels and service marks are the property of Home Box Office, Inc. SHOWTIME is a registered trademark of Showtime Networks Inc., a CBS Company. STARZ and related channels and service marks are property of Starz Entertainment, LLC. Internet speeds, prices and providers may vary by customer address.